

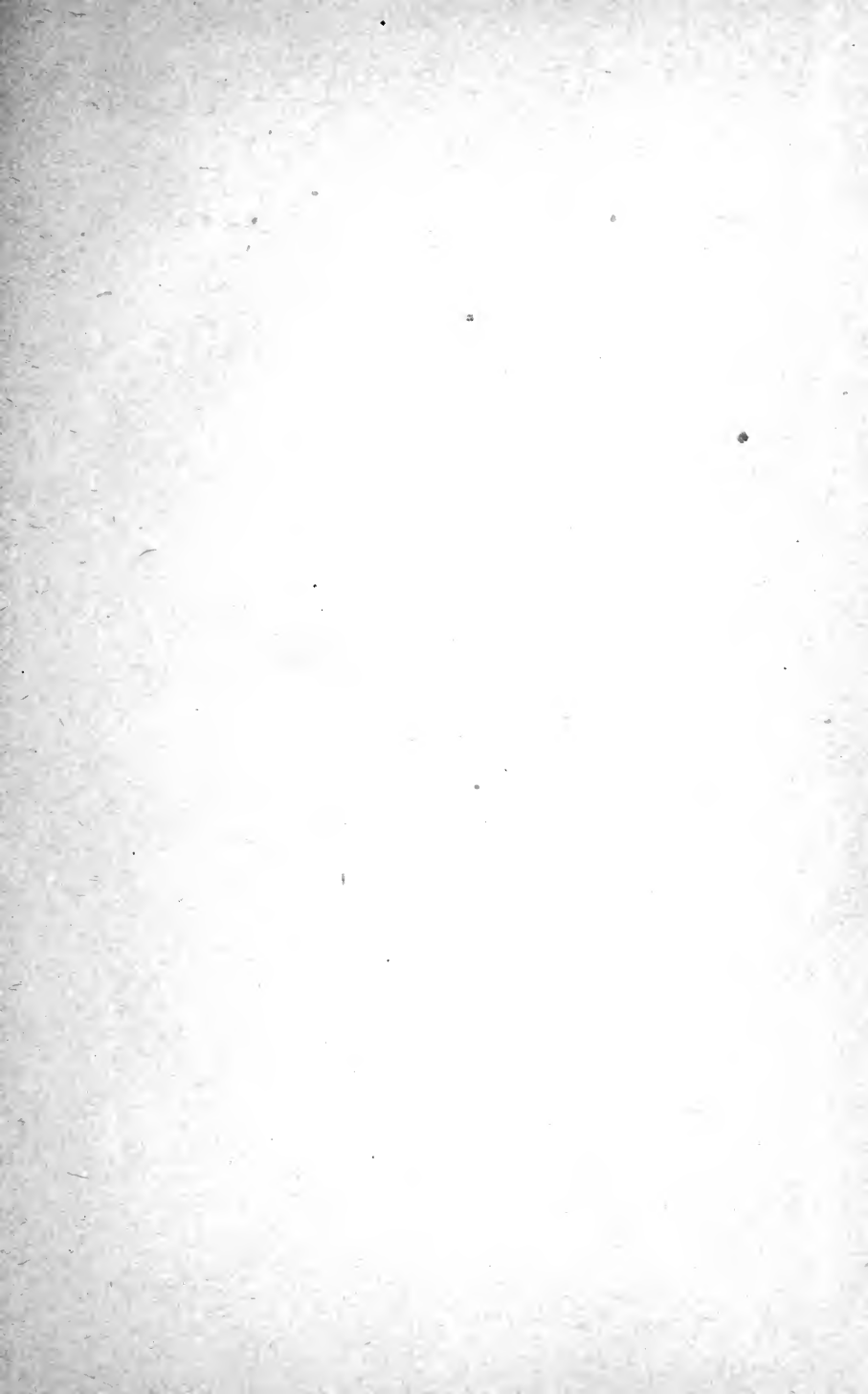
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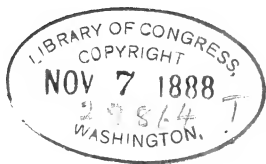
OR,

The Gospel in the Apostolic Age.

BY

REV. THOS. M. McCONNELL, A.M.,

Author of "A Week With Jesus," etc.



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TO MY AGED MOTHER,
WHO TAUGHT ME THE ALPHABET OF RELIGIOUS TRUTH IN
YEARS GONE BY, AND

TO MY BELOVED WIFE,
MY PRESENT FAITHFUL AND EFFICIENT "HELPMEET"
IN ALL LIFE'S LABORS, THIS BOOK IS AFFECTION-
ATELY DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR.

(3)

PREFACE.

THE author's apology for adding another book to the almost limitless number already published, upon well-nigh every phase and feature of religious truth, is the earnest hope that the interesting and important subjects which he has endeavored to compress within these few pages will be investigated by many who have neither the time nor the taste to read more voluminous works, though prepared by far abler pens. He makes no pretensions to originality, but has endeavored to study the inspired history in the light of the best helps within his reach, and has not hesitated to borrow ideas from every available source. With the earnest prayer that the "Sun of righteousness" may illuminate these pages, and thus make them a means for disseminating the light of the glorious gospel, they are sent forth upon their mission, and commended to the charitable consideration of the Christian world.

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DAY-DAWN OF CHRISTIANITY.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

THE origin of moral evil is one of the unsolved, and perhaps unsolvable, problems. We know where sin originated, but cannot tell how or why. We know that it originated in heaven, in the mind and heart of the highest perhaps of all the angels—the one who stood next to God himself in power and influence; and it may have been the ambition to rise one step higher and become equal to God that caused his expulsion from the divine presence. At any rate, we know that after his banishment from heaven he found his way to earth and became instrumental in securing the ruin of the human race. How a being hedged in by every possible safeguard, as man was, could fall must perhaps ever remain shrouded in mystery; and why God permitted him to fall can never be

fully answered. We can conjecture, but that is all. Perhaps it was that he might have a suitable opportunity to display his mercy—that noble characteristic of his nature which has been styled his “darling attribute,” but concerning which nature gives not even the slightest intimation; and so if it be, as some suppose, that each of the myriad worlds which garnish the midnight heavens has for its mission the manifestation of some particular feature of the divine nature, then to earth has been given the high honor of illustrating God’s mercy, as it holds up the bloody cross with its vicarious victim before the wondering gaze of an interested universe.

But whatever the object God had in permitting man to sin, he has graciously overruled the fall both for his own glory and man’s good; and so redeemed humanity is now exalted to heights of privilege and pleasure of which Adam never even dreamed, for at his very best estate he was but a subject and a servant, whereas the Christian is a *son* of God, and consequently, in point of dignity and honor, stands

second only to God himself. Redeemed and regenerated man will thus occupy a position far above angels, who will be but messengers and "ministering spirits," whereas the Christian is a member of the divine family and an heir of the heavenly heritage. But this high position is not his by virtue of any personal merit or inherent right. On the other hand, it is the sovereign gift of free, unmerited grace; and thus man is evidently God's favorite creature. He has done more for him than for any other creature, and this favoritism began to manifest itself from the very earliest period of man's existence; for not only was he originally "created in the divine image," but no sooner was that image marred by sin than God set about to restore it. No study can therefore be more interesting than that which relates to the developments of divine grace in the redemption of sin-cursed humanity; for although we cannot fully solve the problem of man's ruin, we can easily trace the history of his restoration as we find it reflected from the pages of God's word; and there we find that God's plans

for man's redemption are at least as old as Satan's schemes for his ruin. No sooner had the gates of Eden closed upon the apostate than the door of heaven was opened for his reception. And so, while justice utters the awful curse upon the guilty pair, mercy mingles with it a precious promise which, like a beautiful star, shines above the gloom that gathers around the wreck of fallen humanity; and though insufficient to dispel the darkness, nevertheless stands as a lone sentinel through the flight of years to guide the eye of faith and gladden the burdened heart. From that promise as a text, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," God himself preached the first sermon, and with Adam and Eve as members began the organization of the Church, which received additional developments and endowments from time to time, until it was finally and fully equipped for its mission amidst the gracious influences of Pentecost. Just outside the barred gates of Eden fallen man was taught *how* to worship God. There, where the divine presence was symbol-

ized by the "cherubim and flaming sword," he was given a *place* of worship. There, where the bleeding victim blazed upon the altar, he was taught to read the sweet lessons of substitution and expiation, and so received the *ordinances* of worship; and there, as Adam was instructed to offer these sacrifices in behalf of his family, he was given a *minister to officiate* in his acts of worship. Thus equipped, the Church began its career, coeval at least with man's history as a fallen being. At first the altar fires burn here and there upon the hill-tops and reflect the light of the promise down the long line of ten generations, until it is well-nigh obscured by the gathering gloom of infidelity; and God, in vindication of his own honor, determined to destroy the apostate race. But the world only is destroyed. The Church, riding triumphantly upon the crest of the death-dealing waves, is preserved, and to it is given another promise, like a second star, brighter and clearer than the first, while around the two is drawn a bow of radiant beauty as the sign and seal of God's covenant with Noah.

One would naturally suppose that the solemn lessons of the flood would long linger in the memory of man and restrain him from his wicked ways, but facts prove that before the death of the eye-witnesses of that awful providence the world was well-nigh as bad as before; and so God, in order to carry out his purposes of grace, selects from among the idolatrous nations a man whose very name has become synonymous with all that is noble and good. With this man he enters anew into solemn covenant and gives him as its sign and seal the rite of "circumcision"—the first of the Old Testament sacraments. Under the divine blessing the descendants of Abraham increase, both in numbers and resources. But the embryotic nation requires training, and so the hand of Providence leads it across into the land of Egypt, to be taught important lessons in the school of adversity. When these are fully learned he leads forth a mighty nation, and under his own supervision patiently teaches them by means of numerous object-lessons the great, important doctrines of divine wor-

ship. He thus reveals more clearly his purposes in the redemption of the race, and adds as a second sacrament the solemn ordinance of the "Passover." For forty long years Israel is shut out from intercourse with other nations and drilled in great spiritual lessons which God's Spirit and providence bring before them; and when they are sufficiently advanced in a knowledge of the divine will, they are removed to the country which has long been their promised possession. Here they are hedged in by providential safeguards and ceremonial restrictions, in order that they may preserve their identity and remain a separate people, while all the time sage and seer reveal to them the oracles of God with ever-increasing clearness. But notwithstanding their exalted privileges, they become corrupt; and so to punish them for their sins, the hand of Providence scatters them abroad over the world, and thus the knowledge of the expected Messiah is spread far and wide through the nations of the earth. One by one promises, like stars, have come out above the Jewish horizon

until the whole moral firmament is bathed with their soft, mellow light, which, like the auroral glow, announces the approach of an auspicious day. Thus all the world assumes an expectant attitude. But when at last the "Sun of righteousness" does arise upon the sin-shrouded earth, his beams fall upon eyes that are willfully blinded, and hearts closed against his influence, by the fearful power of prejudice. His glory is obscured by the "veil of the flesh," and so his advent, though in striking fulfillment of prophecy, excites the bitter animosity of those who expected him to burst suddenly upon the world with noontide splendor. The birth of the Bethlehem Babe of obscure parentage, and amidst the environments of poverty, was a bitter disappointment to those who expected his advent to be characterized by pomp and power; and his lowly life of toil and sacrifice still further excited their enmity and hatred. It was in vain that as the "Light of the world" he sought to dispel the darkness from their minds, because they "preferred darkness rather than light;"

and so, after long-repeated efforts to penetrate the gloom of prejudiced humanity, his radiance is for a time lost amidst the awful shadows of the cross. Still a few faint beams, like the dim, uncertain rays of the morning twilight, have fallen upon some half-awakened minds and hearts, thus securing for the truth a partial and imperfect lodgment. But soon the bright beams of resurrection glory catch the gaze of these partially opened eyes, and as the "Sun of righteousness" emerges from the gloom of the grave he dissipates the last lingering doubt and chases away the last obscuring shadow from these minds, until they themselves become ablaze with the transcendent luster of the truth; and as they go forth among their fellows each becomes a center and source of light, thus spreading the truth from heart to heart and from house to house, until thousands are brought under its benign influence. The "Sun of righteousness" is the source of all spiritual light and the center of the great moral system around which his people revolve like satellites, just as the natural sun is the

source of physical light and the center of the solar system. To trace the spread of that luminous influence which emanated from the lives and labors of the first heralds of salvation, and which to-day sheds such heavenly luster over this sin-cursed world, is the object of these pages.

CHAPTER II.

THE EARLY MORNING OF CHRISTIANITY.

FOR our knowledge of the "gospel in the apostolic age" we are indebted to a brief record made by Luke, and for our knowledge of him to a few fragmentary references in Paul's Epistles. From these we learn that he was a companion and "fellow-laborer" of the apostle (Philemon i. 24; 2 Tim. iv. 11), a "physician" by profession (Col. iv. 14), and most probably a Gentile by birth. He accompanied Paul on his missionary tours; and as the apostle suffered greatly from infirm health, the "beloved physician" was almost indispensable to him. He was the author of two books—the Gospel that bears his name, and the "Acts of the Apostles"—which stand related to each other somewhat as a first and second volume, and prove very clearly that he was a man of education and culture. The books are both dedicated to the same person, who was doubt-

less an eminent Christian, resident perhaps at Rome, at whose request the notes of travel of this first medical missionary were preserved and published. The title of this second volume was doubtless chosen by the author himself; and the book contains, as its name implies, an account of the "Acts of the Apostles," especially those of Peter and Paul as *specimens* of the work done by the others. It begins with the ascension of our Lord, A.D. 30, and embraces the history of at least thirty years; so that it must have been written somewhere about A.D. 63, and most probably at Rome.

After referring to the fact that his Gospel, or first volume, contained a history of the life of Christ, and what he "began both to do and teach," Luke intimates that his purpose in this second volume is to continue the history of the Church as the work is still carried on by the servants of our Lord acting under his authority and by his direction.

In order that his disciples may become thoroughly acquainted with his purposes and plans, Christ remains with them for "forty

days" after his resurrection, and gives them "many infallible proofs" of his identity. He met with them many times, and freely discussed the "things pertaining to the kingdom of God," kindly correcting their misapprehensions in regard to the nature of that kingdom, and revealing to them the position they were to occupy in the world as "witnesses" for the truth. He gently rebukes their curiosity in regard to things which God has not seen fit to reveal, and assures them that he has something in store for them infinitely better than such knowledge would be, for in a few days he will grant them the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to be their teacher in regard to the Divine will, and to make effectual their efforts in the upbuilding of the Church. Until this Friend should come to guide and bless their labors, they could accomplish nothing; and so he commands them to remain where they were, and not to suffer themselves to be either drawn or driven from Jerusalem until he should authorize them to go. He well knew that they would naturally wish to withdraw

from a place where they had received so many insults and injuries, but he designed that they should make their first offer of pardon and eternal life to the murderers of their Master. Having been commissioned to preach the gospel, they would naturally desire to begin at once; but he well knew that it would require something stronger than human eloquence to reach the heart of sinful man, and so he commands them to wait until he qualifies them for their work. Having thus given them all needed instruction, he leads them out of Jerusalem along the familiar pathway toward Bethany, and there amid those sacred scenes on the sunlit slope of Mount Olivet he is suddenly parted from them and received up into glory. Thus the seal of divine approbation is placed upon his life and work; and so the ascension of Christ is the crowning proof that the scheme of redemption has been finished in exact accordance with God's holy will; and that our Lord was thus welcomed back to his home in heaven is abundantly confirmed by the testimony of eye-witnesses, for he did not disap-

pear mysteriously while the attention of his disciples was directed elsewhere, but "as they were looking upon him" he was caught up, and "a cloud received him out of their sight." They stood gazing in amazement at the receding form until it passed beyond the power of their vision; and while they were thus straining their eyes to catch one last glimpse of their beloved friend, suddenly two messengers from the realms of glory stood before them, and assured them that their Lord would one day return to earth in the same manner in which they had seen him disappear (Matt. xxiv. 30 and xxvi. 24; Mark xiii. 26 and xiv. 6; Luke xxi. 27). Thus recalled from their reverie, the little company tear themselves reluctantly away from the sacred spot, and, returning to Jerusalem, enter that memorable "upper room" which has been so sacredly enshrined in their hearts' holiest affections by reason of its hallowed associations. Here, with minds wandering back over the past, and hearts looking forward to the future, they engage in earnest consultation. Bereft now of their Master, they

effect a reorganization of themselves and acknowledge Peter's restoration to the apostleship. Then come next in order in the catalogue of names "James and John, the sons of Zebedee" (Matt. iv. 21; x. 2; Mark i. 19-29; iii. 7; Luke v. 10; vi. 14). After them appears "Andrew, Simon Peter's brother" (Matt. iv. 18; x. 2; Mark i. 16-29; iii. 18; xiii. 3; Luke vi. 14; John i. 40-44; vi. 8; xii. 22). Next follows "Philip," Andrew's townsman (Matt. x. 3; Mark iii. 18; Luke vi. 14; John i. 44-49; vi. 5-7; xii. 21, 22; xiv. 8, 9). After his name comes that of "Thomas, which was called Didymus," or "Twin," a disciple devoted to his Master, but celebrated for his incredulity (John xi. 16; xiv. 5; xx. 24-29; xxi. 2). Next appears the name of "Bartholomew," who is supposed to be the Nathanael mentioned by John (i. 46-50; xxi. 2). After that follows the name of "Matthew," called also "Levi," and the "Publican" (Matt. ix. 9; x. 3; Mark ii. 14; iii. 18; Luke v. 27-29; vi. 15). Next to Matthew stands the name of "James, the son of Alphaeus," called the

“Less” to distinguish him from “James, the son of Zebedee.” He is also called the “Just,” and was a near kinsman of Christ, if not his own brother (Matt. x. 3; Mark iii. 18; Luke vi. 15; Acts xv. 13-21; Gal. i. 19; ii. 9). After James is recorded the name of “Simon Zealotes,” so called perhaps because of his ardent temper, or because of his previous connection with a fanatical party known as “Zealots;” he is also called the “Canaanite” (Matt. x. 4; Mark iii. 18; Luke vi. 5). And last of all is mentioned “Judas, the brother of James,” called also “Lebbeus,” and “Thaddeus” (Matt. x. 3; Mark iii. 18; Luke vi. 16; John xiv. 22). This is the fourth list of the apostles, and although no two of these lists agree precisely in the order of the names, yet, as Alexander suggests, “they may all be divided into three quaternions, which are never interchanged. Peter’s name always stands first; Philip’s fifth, at the head of the second quaternion; and “James, the son of Alpheus,” ninth, at the head of the third. Thus reörganized, and doubtless in an official capacity, they continue

to meet from day to day with the few congenial spirits who assembled for worship in that sacred "upper room," waiting for the fulfillment of their Lord's promise. Many of these worshipers were pious women, and prominent among them was "Mary, the mother of Jesus." This is the last time her name is mentioned in the sacred record, and is therefore a striking commentary upon the false position assigned her by the Church of Rome, as *she thus disappears from human sight in the very act and attitude of praying to her glorified Redeemer*—in no sense presuming to hear and answer the prayers of others.

The followers of Christ thus assembled together, including men, women, and children, numbered "one hundred and twenty." (Acts i. 15.) These, gathered under the leadership of the apostles, constituted the Church of the new dispensation. After earnest prayer and consultation, they determined to fill the vacancy occasioned by the treachery and death of Judas. Peter, who was perhaps the oldest of the apostles, is, through the deference of

the others, authorized to act as their spokesman. Standing up in the presence of the Church, he recounts briefly the history of the traitor, and suggests the appointment of a successor. With this object in view, they select from the Church two of the brethren noted for their earnest piety and devotion to God's service. Then, after engaging in fervent prayer for the divine guidance, they solemnly appeal to God in the use of the "lot," in order that they may thereby know which of the two he has chosen to be an apostle; and as they cast the dice, "the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles." The Church, now ready for work, patiently awaits the revelation of her Lord's will.

The history of the life and character of the new apostle is compressed into the one brief sentence recorded above; and this short record of one who occupies a position so important teaches a lesson which it may be well to emphasize in this day, when quiet, unostentatious fidelity is un-

dervalued, and men are measured by what the world is pleased to term "success." That Matthias was an earnest, *faithful* minister of the gospel is presupposed by the fact that God in his unerring wisdom selected him as an apostle; but that he ever became famous among his fellow-men we have no evidence whatever—nor is it a matter of any consequence, for it is not the position that a man happens to occupy in the world, nor the kind of work that he does, that secures God's favor, but rather the motive from which and the manner in which he performs his allotted task. The question upon which the soul's eternal destiny turns is not when or where, but how, life's duties are discharged. Many of God's chosen ones are "to fortune and to fame unknown." Their names are never reported in the newspapers; and when they quietly bid adieu to life's labors, and lie down to rest in the silence of the tomb, no high-sounding panegyric will ever be dedicated to their memory; no tall marble pillar, with conspicuous epitaph, keeps watch over their sleeping dust.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

Christ is still carrying on all that he "began to do and teach" while here upon earth.

Christ's resurrection is established by "many infallible proofs."

Patient "waiting" is sometimes as necessary in the Lord's cause as earnest working.

"Secret things belong to God," and man has no right to pry into what has not been revealed.

The Holy Ghost, who is as much a person as either the Father or the Son, is the source of all spiritual power.

The preacher is not a philosopher to evolve truth, but a "witness" to attest facts.

The Christian's mission is to "witness" for Christ, both by word and work, beginning at home.

It is the duty of the Church to preach the gospel in "Judea" as well as in "Jerusalem," in the rural regions as well as in the cultured city, and to carry it "unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

“A *cloud*” oftentimes hides the Saviour from disciples.

Earnest effort is more acceptable to God than idle reverie.

A day is coming when Jesus will return to this world in power and great glory.

CHAPTER III.

CHRIST'S PROMISE FULFILLED.

THE history of the Christian Church crystallizes around the descent of the Holy Spirit; or rather, that event is the real center from which all the other events radiate and borrow their significance. The Church was not organized at that time, for its history is commensurate with that of fallen humanity; but it then received its fullest and final equipment for its Heaven-appointed mission. Till then, the organization was incomplete; since then, the world has been living under the last dispensation, and this dispensation will culminate in the glory of the millennium. No fuller development of the Church, then, need be expected. It received its last installment of divine grace in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, who will remain upon the earth to the end of time for the purpose of imparting to God's people all necessary instruction and

making effective their efforts for the salvation of sinners. This important addition to the resources of the Church was made on the "day of Pentecost," and after the disciples and their godly companions had spent eight successive days in earnest, united, importunate prayer. Thus, before their Lord fulfilled his promise, he severely tested the faith and sincerity of his servants. The term "Pentecost" literally means "fiftieth," and was the name given by the Greek-speaking Jews to the "Feast of Weeks," because it was observed just fifty days after the Passover. It was one of the three great yearly festivals of the Jews, celebrating the completion of the harvest and calling to mind the promises of their covenant-keeping God" (Ex. xxiii. 16; xxxiv. 22; Lev. xxiii. 15, 16; Deut. xvi. 10), and so was a very appropriate time for sending the "Comforter" in fulfillment of the Master's promise. Another reason, probably, for the selection of this time was because at this festival many foreign as well as native Jews were present in Jerusalem, and it was but proper that the

•

same persons who had witnessed Christ's death at the Passover should now witness his power to impart life to others at Pentecost. If we count the fifty days from the crucifixion of Christ, at which time the Passover occurred, then the two days he remained in the grave, added to the forty he spent on earth after his resurrection, would leave only eight between his ascension and the descent of the Holy Spirit; and if the ascension took place on Sabbath, as generally supposed, then on the next Sabbath occurred the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, and *thus God again sanctioned the observance of the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath*; or, knowing as we do that the resurrection occurred on Sabbath, then "fifty" days from that time would bring Sabbath again; so that *it was doubtless on the first day of the week, as the Church was assembled for public worship, that the Master's promise was fulfilled.* In a matter so interesting and important it is but natural that the historian should have recorded all the details. Accordingly, we find that the entire Church, without perhaps a

single exception, were assembled for worship in the same memorable "upper chamber" with marked unanimity of heart and purpose; and while they were engaged perchance in earnest prayer for the fulfillment of the promise, "suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." The answer to their prayer came unexpectedly at last, although they had been anxiously awaiting it for more than a week. The sound was not made by the *wind*, although it resembled such a noise, and it evidently came from above them, descending lower and lower until it filled the room where they were assembled. To this *audible* sign was soon added another, which was addressed to the sight, for following the "sound" there appeared unto them "cloven tongues like as of fire." It was *not* fire any more than the "sound" was "wind;" but it resembled it, and this tongue-shaped, fire-like phenomenon was not a mere electric flash, but it remained for some time upon each person present as the external and visible em-

blem of the Holy Spirit, and especially of the "gift of tongues" with which the Church was now endowed. These sensible signs were immediately followed by the thing signified, for "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues." This does not imply that the Spirit was never in the world before this time (John xx. 22), but it denotes a fresh manifestation of his presence and an extraordinary measure of his influence for the purpose of imparting supernatural gifts. The particular gift conferred at this time was the "gift of tongues," the design of which was to furnish credentials to those who were called to preach, and to prefigure the ingathering of the Gentiles, whose excision from the Church had been typified by the miraculous confusion of tongues at Babel.

God had provided competent and trustworthy witnesses to attest the presence and power of his Spirit, for drawn together in Jerusalem at this time to observe the Feast of Weeks were "Jews, devout men out of every nation

under heaven." No sooner was the strange, weird-like sound heard than it attracted the attention of the whole city, and, following the direction they pointed out, they found the Church in its individual members crowned with a fire-like, tongue-shaped coronet, and speaking in all the dialects represented in the promiscuous multitude gathered from the four corners of the earth. The brogue of the speakers indicated unmistakably that they were "Galileans," and yet they spoke without difficulty the vernacular of all the nations of the then known world. Such supernatural knowledge on the part of those who were doubtless recognized as the illiterate disciples of the crucified Nazarene overwhelmed the multitude with amazement, and they began to inquire among themselves the cause of so strange a phenomenon. Some were already almost won to the cause of truth, but others sought to dissipate these serious impressions from the minds of their comrades by sneeringly charging the disciples with intoxication, and characterizing their wonder-

ful words as the foolish utterances of drunken men.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

When Christians are "all with one accord in one place," engaged in earnest, united, importunate prayer, the Church may expect and will receive Pentecostal blessings.

Every Christian may and shall receive special blessings.

God's Holy Spirit rests upon every believer, however humble and obscure.

The presence of the Holy Spirit cannot be hid.

The Holy Spirit gives to the believer a "new tongue," wherewith he speaks the praises of God.

The preaching of the gospel to representatives of "every nation under heaven" was prophetic of what is yet to occur, when the "glad tidings" will be made known to all men.

Some "marvel at" and adore, while others "mock" and despise the "wonderful works of God."

God never forgets his promises. He was *four thousand years in fulfilling the first promise, but he never forgot it, and fulfilled it at the right time.*

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST GOSPEL SERMON.

THE wonderful power of divine grace to elevate, ennoble, and transform fallen humanity - is perhaps nowhere more strikingly illustrated than in the history of Peter. This disciple, whose very name prior to Pentecost had become a synonym for indiscretion and reckless impetuosity, and bears the ineffaceable stigma of cowardice as the faithless friend who denied his Lord in the hour of his severest need, henceforth stands out conspicuously in the history of the Church as a prudent preacher of the gospel and a bold defender of the truth. He here makes his first appearance as a public speaker to answer the aspersion cast upon the Church as the representative of Christ. The record of Luke represents him as "standing up with the eleven" upon a perfect equality with the others, and acting in concert as the authoritative representatives of

Christ. He thus appears before the vast multitude surrounded by his fellow-disciples, in whose name and by whose authority he speaks, and after challenging the serious and earnest attention of his auditors, he delivers an address which God was pleased to own and honor in the salvation of many souls. Only a brief outline of this sermon has been preserved, but from it we gather that the address was arranged under three heads: First, a refutation of the charge of drunkenness; second, an exposition of Joel's prophecy (Joel ii. 28-32); and third, the application of that prophecy in unfolding the Messiahship of Jesus. To the first division he devotes but a single sentence, as the charge of drunkenness was self-evidently absurd, since only habitual revellers would be intoxicated at so early an hour as nine o'clock, whereas those against whom the charge was brought were devout Jews, and as such observed the custom of abstaining not only from drink but even from food until after the hour for morning prayer, which was the "third hour," or nine A.M. From what Peter

here says we gather that the promise of the Master was fulfilled almost immediately upon the assembling of the Church for public worship, as though God were anxious to put honor upon the observance of the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath. The change of the Sabbath from the last to the first day of the week, in commemoration of his resurrection, was not only sanctioned but authorized and confirmed by Christ by twice appearing in person to his worshiping disciples upon that day, and here again by the manifest presence and power of the Holy Ghost in the Church, in fulfillment of his promise to his people.

Peter having disposed of the false accusation, and shown his audience what the wonderful manifestation before them was not, he passes naturally and logically to the second division of his subject, and proceeds to show what it was—viz., not intoxication, but inspiration—the fulfillment of a prophecy uttered by Joel fully eight hundred years before this time. The third division of his sermon is taken up in interpreting this and other proph-

ecies, and applying them to prove the Messiahship of the crucified Nazarene. From the fragmentary sketch of this sermon preserved by Luke, it seems to have been quite an ordinary discourse, with nothing at all remarkable about it, except that it was attended by extraordinary results. The preacher's evident design was to prove the Messiahship of Christ, and so convict his hearers of the sin of rejecting their promised Deliverer; and, accompanied by the power of the Holy Ghost, his words had the desired effect, for when his auditors heard his burning utterances they were conscience-smitten and overwhelmed with a sense of personal guilt. Seeing the effect of the sermon, when it was ended the disciples held an informal service, or "inquiry meeting," for the purpose of instructing those convicted of sin who, recognizing the apostles as divinely appointed teachers, and realizing that the dreadful deed of murdering their Messiah could not be undone, cry out in agony of soul, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Their manifest desire was to escape from the terri-

ble load of conscious guilt, and so "Peter," acting again as spokesman for the others, said unto them: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Their first duty was to repent of sin, and this was to be attested by a public acknowledgment of it, as well as of a personal faith in the mercy and merit of the crucified Christ, in token of which they were to receive the ordinance of baptism, as a sign and symbol of their spiritual cleansing. "Baptism" is thus made to take the place of "circumcision," as the rite of initiation into the visible Church, and as Peter here declares is to be applied to the children of believing parents as well as to the parents themselves. This every Jew would naturally expect, since the children had from time immemorial been entitled to the privileges of membership in the Jewish Church. But Peter here goes a step farther,

and declares that henceforth these privileges shall be also extended to the children of believing Gentiles to the remotest bounds of the world and the latest limits of time. Luke's condensed record gives us only a *specimen* of what was said and done. The plan of salvation was doubtless fully explained, and the audience urged to embrace it as the only way to escape the dark and dreadful destiny that awaits the finally impenitent. These welcome words fell upon many glad hearts and eager ears, for "the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." Upon the simple confession of their acceptance of Christ as a substitute and Saviour, they were at once received into the fellowship of the Church and "baptized;" but the ordinance could hardly have been administered by immersion, because of the scarcity of water, the want of time, and the insufficiency of apostles to administer the rite to so many. There were no public streams of water in the city to which they could have access, and their Jewish adversaries would hardly have allowed them access to their pri-

vate cisterns for such a purpose. Then, too, it was nine o'clock before the Holy Spirit descended upon the Church, perhaps eleven before Peter could begin his sermon, and some time in the afternoon before the "inquiry meeting" held in the interest of the impenitent could be closed; so that there was self-evidently not time to immerse so many, and certainly not apostles enough to perform so laborious a work, to say nothing at all of the inconvenience of obtaining a change of clothing for such a multitude, or the gross impropriety of exposing themselves to the public gaze in garments saturated with water. The three thousand additions to the Church doubtless embraced some infants, since Peter's exposition of the plan of salvation revealed their right to membership in the Christian Church, and Jewish parents, accustomed all their lives to have their children included with them in the privileges of the Old Testament Church, would not be slow to secure for them all the rights accorded to them under this new dispensation; but it is hardly probable that these

babes were immersed. These new converts were at once received into the Church and indoctrinated afterward, in accordance with the Master's injunction to first "disciple" men by enrolling them as members of his kingdom, and afterward "teach them to observe" his revealed will (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20); and so under this commission children can be "discipled" as well as adults.

That this great revival was a genuine work of grace we have abundant evidence in the after lives of the converts. Luke assures us that "they continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers." They proved their faith by their works. Their lives were fashioned in accordance with the apostle's teachings. They formed a Christian brotherhood, frequently celebrated the Lord's Supper, and met often in the prayer-meeting and other ordinances of public worship. They voluntarily sold their possessions for the purpose of ministering to the wants of their needy brethren. As Jews, they still observed the temple

service with which they had been familiar from their childhood, and in addition observed frequent meetings of their own: not only in the public sanctuary, but also in their homes they held something like our "cottage prayer-meetings." Their whole lives were characterized by simplicity and sincerity. Their hearts were full of song and their homes of sunshine, and in consequence they "had favor with all the people," while the beauty of their example attracted others to the cross, and thus the Lord through their instrumentality "added his saved ones daily to the Church."

One cause of this signal success was the deep impression made upon the public mind by the wonders of Pentecost and the fact that the apostles were indued with miraculous power; but perhaps the silent influence of consistent Christian example was, after all, the most effective agency in winning others to Christ.

We have here the plan of salvation strikingly illustrated. We find: 1. *The prayer-*

meeting, in which the whole Church is engaged in asking for the presence and power of God's Spirit. 2. *The preaching of the gospel* made effective through God's answer to the prayers of his people. 3. *Conviction of sin* produced by plain, pointed preaching. 4. *Earnest inquiry* for the way of life in consequence of a sense of sin. 5. *Repentance and faith* awakened by the answer to the inquiry. 6. *Public confession of Christ* as the result and proof of faith. 7. *The gift of the Holy Ghost* as the seal of salvation. 8. *The assurance of hope* as the result of the indwelling of the Spirit. 9. *A spirit of generosity* attesting the truth of the profession. 10. *A holy and happy life* as the infallible proof of true discipleship. 11. *The constant upbuilding of the Church* as the natural and necessary consequence of such influences.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

The chief of sinners may be saved, since the murderers of the Messiah have been saved.

Repentance toward, faith in, and confession of Christ secure the "remission of-sins."

The promise of mercy, like the wave upon the water, ever widens until it embraces all.

True faith leads to public confession of Christ.

Young converts need instruction, and the more Bible knowledge they have the better Christians they become.

Christian unity and Christian sympathy are essential factors in the success of the Church.

Attendance upon the prayer-meeting and the observance of the Lord's Supper are important duties as well as precious privileges.

Christianity is unselfish, and prompts to generosity.

Godliness and selfishness are direct opposites.

Frequent observance of God's ordinances is a duty that cannot be neglected without injury to the Christian.

Christ's service promotes joy, and God's word enjoins it, so that it is a sin to be sad. By this it is not meant that the strings of the heart, when swept by the hand of pain or sorrow, will not quiver with a momentary moan, or that there is any thing wrong in such an

instinctive response; but it is meant to say that that settled sadness and gloomy, melancholy look in which the soul of man so often shrouds itself is in direct violation of God's clear command, and in conspicuous conflict with the highest interests of human nature.

The Lord alone can add genuine converts to the Church.

CHAPTER V.

PETER'S FIRST MIRACLE.

ALTHOUGH Christians, the apostles were also Jews, and still observed the Jewish forms of worship in addition to their own religious services. As yet, the history of the Church was confined to the Jewish metropolis, and the apostles were "beginning" their labors "at Jerusalem," as their Master had directed them. Naturally, they spent much of their time together, and often repaired to the temple for worship. One day, as two of them were going up to observe the "hour of prayer," there occurred an incident the influence of which was felt throughout the entire city. These two disciples were Peter and John, who, although so unlike in disposition, had long been familiar friends. Even before they were called to follow the Master, they had been partners in business (Luke v. 1-11); and subsequent to this call they were fre-

quently together (Luke xxii. 8; John xiii. 23, 24; xviii. 15, 16; xx. 2; xxi. 7). They seem to have retained this old preference for each other; and as they now wend their way together toward the temple, to observe the hour of evening prayer, about three o'clock in the afternoon, they come suddenly upon one of those numerous objects of charity which in olden times were so familiar to those who attended upon the temple services, and which their law made it a duty to aid. (Deut. xiv. 28, 29; xv. 7-11; xxvi. 12, 13.) This case was peculiarly distressing, for the poor man, who was now more than forty years of age (Acts iv. 22), had been a life-long cripple, and so was doubtless considered both by himself and friends as absolutely incurable. Seeing the apostles approaching, he stops them with his piteous plea for help. Something in the poor cripple's manner perhaps suggested to Peter the thought of a miraculous cure; and so, enlisting the man's attention, he commands him in the name and by the authority of "Jesus Christ of Nazareth to rise up and walk;"

adopting, as Abbott suggests, "the appellation given in derision, that he may share the obloquy of his Master and honor even his dishonored title." The thoughtful reader cannot well fail to be struck with the marked difference between this miracle and those of Christ, who always speaks in his own name, and accomplishes the cure by his own divine power. Having by his command awakened in the poor cripple a vague hope and a dawning faith, Peter, in order to strengthen and develop them, takes the man by the hand and lifts him up, when lo! an instantaneous cure is effected. Luke, as a physician, gives a diagnosis of the disease and the details of the cure, from which it appears that the difficulty was a constitutional weakness of the "feet and ankles." This being removed, the man not only "walked," but "leaped" about in the wild ecstasy of delight, which was not only an evidence of his great joy, but positive proof of the completeness of his cure. Having never learned to walk, his being able to do so at once was itself almost a miracle. But the

cure reached his soul as well as his body, as the Greek indicates, and so as an expression of his gratitude to God, whom he no doubt realizes as the real author of his great blessing, he accompanies his new-found friends into the temple, and with a heart overflowing with thankfulness and joy engages in divine worship. While he thus gives expression to his feelings he also attracts the attention of the multitude to the reality of the miracle, and so not only gives glory to God himself, but gains honor and glory for him from others. The people instantly recognized the familiar form and features of the cripple whom they had been so long accustomed to see at the "Beautiful Gate of the temple," so that they could not deny the miracle even if they had wished to do so; and hence they "were filled with amazement at that which had happened." They knew that Christ, during his life upon earth, had performed such miracles; but they were amazed to find miraculous power clinging to his very name. After suitably expressing his gratitude to God for the great mercy

shown him, the cured and converted cripple continues to cling to Peter and John in a transport of joy, and by words and gestures indicating his uncontrollable delight he soon attracts around him a great crowd eager to learn the facts, and if possible to solve the mystery, thus furnishing Peter with another vast audience of interested hearers to whom he can preach the gospel. Gladly he avails himself of this opportunity to explain to his deluded countrymen God's wonderful scheme of redemption. Expressly disclaiming any peculiar gift or superior piety, such as was supposed to confer extraordinary power, like a true disciple he seeks to turn the attention of the people away from himself to his Master. He introduces his remarks by a formula long familiar to his Jewish auditors, and so identifies the new religion with the old, while he accounts for the miracle by ascribing it to the power of their covenant-keeping God whom their nation had worshiped from the days of Abraham. The miracle was simply another of the many credentials which their Jehovah

had furnished to the rejected Christ. In striking contrast with this consideration on the part of God for his Son, Peter places the guilty conduct of the Jews in murdering their Messiah. He charges them with deliberately rejecting his claims, repudiating his Messiahship, and renouncing his salvation; and that too in the presence of a heathen ruler, an enemy of their religion and their God, who, satisfied of his prisoner's innocence, made repeated efforts to secure his release, and only consented to his condemnation in order to satisfy and silence the clamors of the cruel crowd: so that the efforts of this heathen judge to secure the acquittal of his innocent prisoner puts to shame the persistent and determined demands of these his own chosen people to secure his death. But their guilt was still further aggravated by desiring the release of the murderous Barabbas, while they insisted upon the death of the "Prince of Life." They not only thus sought the release of the destroyer of life, but the destruction of the Giver of all life, physical as well as spiritual.

The preacher, with great skill and crushing power, again brings the guilty conduct of his hearers into sharp and striking contrast with the honorable consideration which God shows their Messiah. They reject and murder him, but God "raises him from the dead;" and of this stupendous fact the apostles stand ready to testify. It was the power of this crucified and risen Christ which had wrought the notable miracle in the cure of the cripple; and that power was obtained through faith, which was itself the gift of God.

How striking the contrast between Peter's former cowardice in denying his Master and his present courageous conduct in directly charging his audience with the murder of their Lord, and that too under the most aggravated circumstances! But imbibing the spirit of his Master, he hastens to alleviate the suffering he is compelled to inflict; and as a means to this he identifies himself with his countrymen, and so indicates his desire for their welfare. He suggests a palliation, but by no means an excuse, for their crime. They had acted "igno-

rantly," but still it was "with wicked hands" that they had murdered their Messiah. They had strangely overlooked the true meaning of the prophecies (Ps. xxii. 16; Isa. liii.; Dan. ix. 26; Zech. xi. 13), and so unwittingly helped to fulfill them in the awful events connected with the crucifixion. Having thus charged them with their terrible crime, and intimated a hope of escape through the mercy of God, Peter earnestly exhorts them to "repent and be converted, that their sins may be blotted out."

The plan of salvation is strikingly illustrated in the miraculous cure of the cripple. First, the sinner, like the cripple, is helpless and dependent—"lame from the womb." Second, guided by friends—the Holy Ghost and pious men—he seeks help; "is carried to the temple, and asks alms." Third, his prayer is heard. "Peter [as Christ's representative] fastens his eyes upon him" and speaks to him. Fourth, faith is thereby awakened; "he expects to receive something." Fifth, faith prompts to obedience and effects a cure; "his

feet and ankle-bones receive strength." Sixth, the cure manifests itself in acts of worship in God's house and with God's people; "he enters with Peter and John into the temple, praising God." Seventh, the change in his character and conduct attracts others to the gospel; "all the people run unto Peter and John," and hear the plan of salvation.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

God's house is a means of blessing to the poor and needy.

To relieve the suffering and afflicted is an important duty.

Many ask for trifles when God is willing to give them better blessings.

Kind words find ready access to the troubled heart.

Those who have no money can still give much that will brighten and bless the lives of others.

There is immeasurable power in "the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth."

God gives the power to obey along with the command.

The helping hand may often bring salvation to the hopeless heart.

The effort to obey secures the strength necessary to obedience.

The joy that Christ's name inspires cannot be hid.

Men wonder at the change produced in the individual and the world by the magic name of Jesus.

Those who praise God for his goodness often attract others to hear the gospel.

Miracles are marvels only as viewed from a human stand-point.

The true preacher seeks to turn the attention of his audience away from himself to his Master.

God furnished his Son with indisputable credentials of his Messiahship.

The true preacher declares the "whole counsel of God," without fear or favor.

Plain personal preaching is the most pungent and profitable, though not always the most popular.

Our Lord was pronounced innocent repeat-

edly by the very judge who condemned him to death.

"Vox populi" is not always *"vox Dei."*

Faith, as well as the salvation it secures, is the gift of God.

Ignorance may palliate the offense, but cannot excuse the offender.

The true preacher, while he reproves the sin, at the same time charitably regards the sinner.

All that God hath "shewed by the mouth of his prophets he has fulfilled," or will do so at the proper time.

Remission of sins and "times of refreshing" follow "repentance" and "conversion," both in the individual and the Church.

Christ, though unseen, is still at work for his people.

CHAPTER VI.

PERSECUTION COMMENCED.

PETER'S sermon in the temple awakened the first mutterings of the coming storms of persecution, for as he and John "spake unto the people" in "Solomon's Porch," they met with opposition from three different sources: First, from the "priests" who had charge of the temple service, and who objected to the apostles preaching because they had no official authority to teach, and therefore infringed upon their privileges and prerogatives; but their chief objection was perhaps because Peter and John ascribed honor and power to the name of the despised Nazarene. A second class of opponents was found in the temple police, a company of Levites whose duty it was to preserve order in the temple, and who therefore objected to the running together of the people as disorderly and indecorous; and a third class were the "Sadducees," a re-

ligious sect, and at the same time political party of the Jews, who derived their name from their founder, Zadok, or from a Hebrew word denoting "righteous." They were the *Materialists* of that day, who sought to amalgamate the religion of the Jews with the philosophy of the Greeks. They especially disliked the doctrine of the resurrection, and therefore readily joined the others against the apostles; and as Abbott suggests, "this first persecution of the Church is a type of all that follow. A corrupt priesthood lead the way, the civil power is its instrument, while the infidel world combines with and sustains the other two." The fact of Christ's resurrection was clearly attested by the miracle, and so, by inference, the doctrine of a general resurrection was set forth. The Sadducees, therefore, objected to the doctrine taught by the apostles, while the priests objected to the fact of their teaching at all; and combining their forces, they come upon the preachers with some degree of violence, as indicated by the Greek, and effecting their arrest thrust them into

prison until the next day, when they intend to arraign them before the Jewish court. The miracle was performed about three o'clock. Some time doubtless elapsed before the crowd assembled, and Peter's sermon, of which most probably only a small portion is recorded, took up a considerable time longer, so that it must have been near twilight when the arrest was made.

But notwithstanding the rude arrest of the preachers, the preaching was abundantly successful; for in spite of the malice of the priests, "many of them that heard the word believed, and the number of the men was about five thousand." This may mean that there were five thousand converts added to the Church at this time, but it more probably means that the whole membership, including the three thousand received at Pentecost, was now five thousand. And that the converts were all men is also improbable, although some have so argued from the alleged fact that women were restricted to the "court of the women," and were excluded from "Solomon's Porch." The

truth intended to be conveyed most probably is that the Church continued to grow by daily additions until its entire membership, including men, women, and children, now numbered five thousand.

At an early hour the next day the Sanhedrim, or supreme court of the Jewish nation, was convened for the purpose of trying the prisoners. In addition to the priests, it was composed of "elders and scribes." The former were a class of Jewish officials of great authority and influence, so-called because formerly chosen from the "old men," or heads of families; while the latter were the interpreters and conservators of the law, whose duty it was to explain as well as to copy and preserve it. This court was composed of seventy-two members—twenty-four elders, twenty-four priests, and twenty-four scribes—in imitation, or continuation probably, of the "seventy elders" who assisted Moses (Num. xi. 16–25), and was presided over by the high-priest. At this time the Jews were in the anomalous position of having *two* high-priests — "Annas," who

occupied the position by hereditary right, and his son-in-law, "Caiaphas," who occupied it by Roman appointment. They were both present upon this occasion, as were also many of their kinsmen, so that the council to try Peter and John was packed with relatives and personal friends of the judges. The Sanhedrim is said to have sat in a semicircle; and when all the necessary ritualistic forms and ceremonies had been duly complied with, the officers brought the prisoners before the court, and at once they were questioned in regard to the miracle performed the preceding day. The fact of the miracle could not be denied; and that it had been performed in the name and by the authority of Jesus of Nazareth was equally well known, for it was the proclamation of that name that had caused the apostles' arrest. But the law (Deut. xiii. 1-5) required the death of any one who sought to turn away the people from their allegiance to Jehovah, and under that law Christ himself had been condemned; so the question as to their authority for speaking in the name of the condemned and cruci-

fied malefactor is here formally asked in order to secure against the prisoners the charge of blasphemy, or else to frighten them into a modification or retraction of what they claimed for the still hated Jesus. This gives the apostles an opportunity to speak in their own defense, and Peter makes his *fourth* recorded speech. The first was addressed to his fellow-Christians (Acts i. 15); the second to the Pentecostal assembly (Acts ii. 14); the third to the multitude in the temple (Acts iii. 12); and the fourth now in the presence of the supreme court of his nation. His increasing boldness is remarkable when contrasted with his former cowardice (Matt. xxvi. 69-75). He here, under these trying circumstances, receives the fulfillment of his Master's promise (Luke xii. 11, 12), and is "filled with the Holy Ghost." He addresses the court with respect, but at the same time fearlessly, accusing its members of murdering the Messiah; and so the prisoner arraigns the court; and more than that—he sustains the charge! The speaker's language is that of bitter, biting sarcasm. He

had been arraigned by the august court of the Jewish nation for the performance of what was self-evidently a "good deed!" But he now charges the court with the commission of a foul murder, for he boldly declares that the miracle was performed in the name and by the power of the despised Nazarene whom their jealous hatred had put to death in the hope of getting rid of his dreaded influence, while in striking contrast with their bloody deed stands the act of God in raising him from the dead, in attestation of which he has but to point to the cured and converted cripple who now stands in their presence, either as a voluntary witness in favor of the prisoners, or else arrested as a party to the alleged disturbance in the temple. The Greek verb in reference to the cure of the cripple indicates that he was saved in soul as well as body; and Peter makes this specific case of salvation the basis for unfolding a general salvation through this crucified and rejected Christ, and boldly affirms in the presence of these official teachers of religion that all their ritualistic forms and

ceremonies are vain and worthless unless they are thus led to a living, personal faith in the merit and mercy of that Messiah whom they deliberately murdered. Their rejection of Christ was but the fulfillment of prophecy, as Peter shows by an apt quotation (Ps. cxviii. 22), which is the sixth, if not the seventh, prophecy expounded and applied by him since he began his mission as a preacher of the gospel. But he gives them clearly to understand that their blunder was not one of theory; on the other hand, it was intensely practical, involving their souls' salvation, since God had but one plan of redemption, and that was through faith in his Son.

Peter was a practical preacher, and here presents the very essence of true religion—the one grand, emphatic truth of the Bible, around which all others crystallize and revolve. That salvation is impossible aside from Christ is the great fundamental doctrine of revelation that gleams upon every page and is reflected from every verse of God's word, from the first of Genesis to the very last of Revelation; and

when these Jewish officials heard this truth, so repugnant to their preconceived opinions, thus boldly proclaimed by their prisoners, they were overwhelmed with astonishment and anger. They were amazed that these unlettered fishermen, whom they readily recognized as the two disciples who were present at the trial of Jesus of Nazareth, only a few short weeks before, should possess such fluency of speech and courage of soul when brought into the presence of the most cultured doctors and highest officials of the Jewish nation. Gladly would they have denied the miracle, but there in their very presence stood the well-known cripple, erect and strong, and they "could say nothing against it;" and to punish men for performing a deed so noble and good they well knew the people would not allow. (Acts iv. 21.) So, finding themselves in an awkward dilemma, they send their prisoners out of the council chamber, in order that they may discuss among themselves the best course to pursue. They are compelled to acknowledge the miracle (Acts iv. 16), yet are afraid to

attempt to punish those who performed it; and by way of compromise, and in the hope of deterring them in the future, they recall the prisoners and threaten them with severe punishment if they ever attempt to teach the people about Jesus of Nazareth. But what must have been their surprise and disappointment when Peter and John answered: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." As true disciples they were actuated by no motives of mere expediency, and would not even listen to, much less obey, any suggestion contrary to the divine will. They had been commissioned to preach the gospel, and they were fully determined to do so, and leave the results with God; for there was a sublime necessity both impelling and compelling them to testify for Christ. Alarmed, no doubt, by this increasing boldness, but having nothing else that they can do, the Sanhedrim attempt again to deter them by threats of punishment, and then by judi-

cial act release them from custody. But in so doing they were not actuated by any regard to equity or justice, for they would gladly have put the prisoners to death, and were only deterred from doing so because of the joyous and daily repeated demonstration on the part of the people over the miraculous cure of their crippled friend. According to Abbott: "By one of those dramatic changes common in life, we are suddenly transported from the council chamber of the Sanhedrim into the midst of the Christian brotherhood. The malice and perturbation of the one, the purity and peace of the other, stand out the more clearly from the contrast," for no sooner did Peter and John regain their liberty than they "went to their own company," who were probably at that very moment engaged in prayer for their deliverance. They return to the church to seek sympathy and counsel, and "so report all that the chief priests and elders said unto them," in order that their brethren, being acquainted with the facts, may direct them how to act, and at the same time

determine how to conduct the affairs of the Church. The Church at once recognizes the conduct of the Sanhedrim as a declaration of war, and betake themselves in earnest, united prayer to God for counsel. They refer to various prophecies, which they see signally fulfilled in the history of their cause, and plead them before the throne of grace as arguments in their favor. Rising above all selfish considerations, they do not ask deliverance from danger, but from cowardice. Self is lost sight of in the absorbing interest they feel in their imperiled cause; so that all they ask is courage to do their duty and credentials to support their claims, in order that their adversaries may be confounded and the name of their blessed Master receive honor and glory. And before the echo of this unselfish prayer had died away, "the place where they were assembled was shaken by divine power, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," in attestation of the fact that their prayers were heard and answered, and as a prophecy that the power of the gospel would

yet shake the whole world from center to circumference,

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

“The carnal mind has ever been enmity against God” and his cause. Bigots and infidels have conspired against the Church in all ages of the world.

“The resurrection from the dead” has ever been a stumbling-block in the way of infidelity.

Preachers, prisons, and persecutions have long been familiarly acquainted.

Disciples arraigned before bigots form many of the pictures with which Church history is illustrated.

Christ fulfills all his promises.

“Good deeds” are often misunderstood and misrepresented.

True disciples are neither ashamed nor afraid to acknowledge the “name of Jesus of Nazareth.”

“Chief corner-stones” in the temple of truth have oftentimes long been “set at naught of the builders.”

Salvation in Christ alone is the one emphatic, central truth of the Bible, around which all others cluster and revolve.

Christianity gives power and influence even to "unlearned and ignorant men."

If we have really "been with Jesus," men will "take knowledge" of the fact.

The good effects of Christianity are unanswerable arguments in its favor.

The true disciple obeys God at any cost.

"Whether it be right in the sight of God," should ever be the criterion of duty.

The true Christian "cannot but speak the things he has seen and heard" in his religious experience.

The good and the bad alike, when unrestrained, seek congenial companionship.

The best place for the tried Christian to go for sympathy and assistance is to the Church; and, conversely, the Church should ever be ready to extend aid and sympathy to those in trouble.

The enmity of the world only drives the true Christian nearer to God.

It is the Christian's privilege to tell all of his trials to God.

The God of creation is likewise the God of providence. He who made his people can take care of them.

By studying God's providences we will often find in them the fulfillment of his prophecies.

God's purposes cannot be frustrated, for he controls the results of even the bad deeds of wicked men.

God makes the very wrath of his enemies redound to his glory, and overrules their wicked deeds for the accomplishment of his purposes.

True prayer is prompted by a desire to glorify God rather than to benefit self.

"God is a present help in every time of need."

CHAPTER VII.

HYPOCRITES PUNISHED.

IN consequence of the revival and persecution brought about by the healing of the cripple, the disciples were still more closely united in bonds of sympathy and affection, and, like Barnabas (Acts iv. 36, 37), many others doubtless sold their possessions and gave the price to the apostles for the benefit of their needy brethren; and thus, as Olshausen suggests, "probably among the new Christians a kind of holy rivalry sprung up, every one eager to place his means at the disposal of the apostles." But while such conduct was commendable, it was liable to abuse, for the zeal of some might outrun their principle, and they might be tempted to seek credit for a liberality which they really did not possess; and as a matter of fact we find that some did act thus, and so brought the "first trace of a shadow upon the bright form of the young Church."

The mournful contrast between the generosity of the true disciple and the hypocrisy of the false is introduced by what Matthew Henry terms a "melancholy but." Two disciples, "Ananias" and his wife, "Sapphira," whose names mean respectively "the Lord is gracious" and "a beauty," and which stand therefore in striking contrast with the baseness of their conduct, act the hypocrite, and thus bring the first odium upon the Church. Like others, they desired to gain a reputation for liberality, and they sold their property ostensibly for the purpose of donating the proceeds to the Church; but their covetousness getting the better of their Christianity, they "kept back part of the price," the idea in the Greek being that of "embezzlement." Taking a part of the money, they come to the church at a time perhaps of religious worship, and offer it to the apostles for God's cause as an act of religious worship, their object being doubtless to make the matter as public as possible. But their motive being revealed to Peter by the Holy Ghost, he meets the pretended worship-

ers and sternly rebukes them for their attempt at deception. He declares that their object is already manifest to the Church, and that their hypocrisy was an insult not only to their brethren, but especially to the Holy Ghost, who not only dwelt in the Church, but who constantly presided over its destiny. He indicates most clearly that the hypocrite, like all the others, had acted voluntarily in selling his land. There was no compulsory law requiring any of the Church to give all or even a part of their lands to support their needy brethren; and while the voluntary nature of such offerings—when made by true Christians from proper motives—only rendered their conduct the more commendable, it at the same time greatly aggravated the guilt of these hypocrites. The influence of the tempter is never represented as coercive, but always as persuasive and resistible (James iv. 7); and so “Ananias and Sapphira” were inexcusable, for instead of repelling the evil suggestion they cherished it until the thought ripened into a guilty deed. No sooner do these words of re-

buke fall upon the ears of the conscious hypocrite than he falls dead at the feet of the apostle, struck down by the direct visitation of a justly offended God. His death, instead of being occasioned by Peter, was perhaps as great a surprise to him as to his companions. It was customary among the Jews to bury soon after death, partly because decomposition takes place rapidly in the warm climate of Palestine, and partly because of their peculiar notions about defilement from the dead; so the younger men of the congregation carried the corpse away at once, and placed it in one of the vaults customarily used by the Jews for burial. This was probably done during the intermission between the morning and afternoon service; and when the congregation came together again for the second service, about "three hours after," the wife of the dead man—ignorant of his fearful fate, but fully acquainted with his guilty conduct—comes in, doubtless expecting to meet her husband and share with him the gratitude of the Church. As she enters Peter addresses her and asks if the money,

her husband had brought the Church was the entire price of the land, thus giving her an opportunity to repent and confess her sin. But instead of doing so she seeks to cover up her lie of action by one of utterance. Convinced that the guilty act was deliberate and presumptuous, the result of conspiracy and preconcert, the apostle delivers a stern rebuke, and assuring her of the death of her husband he foretells her own fearful fate. As she receives this first intimation of her husband's death, and that her guilty conduct is known, she also suddenly falls down at Peter's feet and dies in ignominy and disgrace upon the very spot where she had expected to receive the plaudits of a grateful Church! But here again Peter did not inflict the death-penalty; he merely foretold it, and as the awful prophecy is fulfilled the "young men" enter the house, and "carrying her forth, buried her by her husband." An incident at once so remarkable and solemn necessarily produced a deep impression upon all who knew of it, restraining believers from wrong-doing and deterring hyp-

ocrites from joining the company of the disciples. The Church received a wholesome lesson, and the outside world, instead of disparaging the character of Christians, as they might otherwise have done on the discovery of such hypocrisy, were awed at the manifest presence of divinity among them, and the mysterious power of throwing off such corrupt matter from the Church.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

Barnabas and Ananias—the good and the bad, the true and the false, the “wheat” and the “tares”—have ever been found together in the Church.

Every life is an example either to win or to warn those who come after it.

Many a modern Ananias has “kept back part of the price” of his earthly possessions after he has professedly consecrated them *all* to God’s service.

“The love of money is the root of all evil.”

“Beware of covetousness, which is idolatry.”

To be, and not to seem, is the object of every true life.

“All liars shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone.”

“Man never deceives himself so much as when he attempts to deceive God.”

God’s judgments are monumental, and are intended not only to vindicate his own honor, but to serve as a warning to others.

“Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished.”

“It is easy to tell one lie; hard to tell but one.”

CHAPTER VIII.

TRIALS AND TROUBLES OF THE CHURCH.

THE signal punishment of Ananias and Sapphira exerted a salutary influence upon the Church, not only by deterring hypocrites from joining it, but by restraining its members from wrong-doing; and by thus increasing its *purity* added greatly to its *power*, insomuch that many miracles were performed by the apostles, and “multitudes, both of men and women” were added to the company of believers. But this increasing popularity of the Church only intensified the hatred of the Jewish rulers, and caused them to renew their persecutions. The high-priest, aroused from his inactivity by the persistent and rapid growth of the Church, gathers around him all those who were in sympathetic opposition to Christianity; and conspicuous among them were the Sadducees, who were among the most ardent members of the coalition, if not the

leaders of this persecution, because the central truth of the apostles' teaching struck at the very foundation of their system of belief, or rather *unbelief*, which was the denial of a future life.

According to their custom the apostles went day after day to the temple for worship and to instruct the people, and while thus engaged the temple police, incited thereto by the priests, came upon them, and arresting them thrust them into prison until the Sanhedrim could be called together to try them. While they are thus cut off from their labors, and perhaps depressed and disappointed, an angel suddenly enters the prison, and opening the doors commands them to return to the temple and preach the gospel. They were thus set at liberty, not to flee from persecution, but to warn others to "flee from the wrath to come," and were commissioned not merely to talk in private, but to preach in public, not a part of the truth, but "all the words of this life." The frequency of angelic interference in the early days of the Church is remarkable.

In Luke's condensed history of the first labors of the apostles the word "angel" occurs twenty times, and six distinct kinds of work are related as performed by them. The appearance of this heavenly messenger at this time was a direct overthrow of the Sadducean doctrine denying the existence of angels and spirits (Acts xxiii. 8)—an encouragement to the disciples, and a warning to their persecutors. Thus divinely instructed, the apostles leave the prison, and "early in the morning" again enter the temple and begin their work of teaching the people about Christ and his claims. They are thus engaged when the high-priest and his abettors assemble to organize the Sanhedrim. They are impatient to punish their prisoners, and so assemble at the earliest practicable moment; and as the meeting is regarded as of unusual interest and importance, so the attendance is unusually large, "all the senate of the children of Israel," the whole "eldership," being present. After due consultation among themselves as to the best course to pursue, the high-priest "sends to

the prison " to have the accused brought before the court, little aware that their prisoners (?) had voluntarily preceded them to the place of trial, and were even then engaged in preaching the hated gospel not fifty yards perhaps from where the Sanhedrim sat. When the messengers reach the prison they find the doors securely fastened and the guards faithfully watching the empty cells, for when the doors are opened they find to their amazement that the men whom they held in custody, as they supposed, are nowhere to be found. When the astonished messengers return to the temple and report these things to the court, these high officials are sorely disappointed and greatly perplexed, not knowing how to account for the escape of the prisoners, and dreading its effect upon the people. But while they are thus deploring their misfortune and seeking to devise means to counteract it, one of the numerous visitors to the temple, who had just been listening to the preaching of the apostles, passes by, and learning of the perplexity of the court startles them with the

declaration, "Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people." They had manifestly not attempted to escape trial, but, as if inviting it, were publicly doing the very thing that the court had previously commanded them not to do. This information astonishes the Sanhedrim perhaps even more than the knowledge that their prisoners had escaped from their guards; and after holding a hurried consultation, they send the temple guard to rearrest the apostles and bring them before the court. When the officers approach the preachers they make no resistance, and the arrest is quietly made. But this was the result not so much of the quiet submission of the prisoners as because the guard was restrained from violence out of regard for their own personal safety, for the people evidently sympathized with the apostles, and were now even more interested in them on account of their miraculous escape from prison, so that they would doubtless have resented any violence toward the prisoners. Once arraigned before the

court, the high-priest loses no time in reminding them of their former appearance before the Sanhedrim, and demanding why they had refused to obey the command to refrain from preaching. He purposely suppresses the name of Christ, either through contempt or superstitious dread lest he might after all be the Messiah, or from a guilty reluctance to call the name of his murdered victim. Instead of obeying the court, the high-priest declares that the apostles had boldly taught the new religion in all parts of Jerusalem, thus unwittingly bearing testimony to the diligence and fidelity of the preachers, as well as to the remarkable success of their preaching. They had never at any time made an effort to incite the people against their rulers, nor to bring upon these officials divine vengeance, but they had publicly held them responsible for the blood of their Master; hence these conscious murderers, fearing the vengeance of the people who so evidently sympathized with the apostles, charge them with attempting to bring upon the members of the Sanhedrim the blood

of the hated Nazarene. They again suppress his name, but unmistakably betray a disagreeable recollection of their own recent imprecation, "His blood be on us." (Matt. xxvii. 25.)

Peter still acts as spokesman for his brethren, and boldly speaks in their defense. As the high-priest had referred to the former trial (Acts iv. 18-20), so he likewise refers to it, and reminds the court of the determination to obey God then expressed by the prisoners, which he now repeats with still greater emphasis. Then, as being himself a Jew, he identifies himself with his hearers, whom he boldly accuses not only of murdering their Messiah, but of heaping upon him the greatest possible dishonor by putting him to death on the hated and ignominious Gentile cross. In striking contrast with this cruel conduct he presents again the honor which God put upon his Son, not only in raising him from the dead, but in giving him a place of power and authority at his own right-hand in heaven. This contrast between the divine and human treatment received by his Master seems to have

been the key-note of Peter's sermons, and was ever sounded with telling effect (Acts ii. 23, 24, 37; iii. 13-15, with iv. 4, and iv. 10 with 14). He here declares that the murdered Jesus possessed both that *royalty* and *saving* character which Israel expected in their Messiah, but the latter feature of which they had so strangely lost sight of; that he had the right as well as the power to pardon and sanctify even his murderers, through repentance and faith; and to show that these things were true, he asserts that himself and companions had been commissioned to bear testimony along with the Holy Ghost, who, in the wonders of Pentecost and subsequent miracles performed by the apostles, had furnished them with *credentials* that could not be challenged; so that they and the Holy Spirit were thus joint witnesses to the power and willingness of their Master to pardon and save sinners. This sermon of Peter's is remarkable for its brevity, consisting as it does of three sentences, and also for its compactness and completeness; for, as Abbott suggests, "it declares the crucifixion, resurrec-

tion, and ascension of our Lord, his double character as King and Saviour, his mission to cleanse away sin, the condition of receiving the benefits he affords, and the twofold evidence of these truths, human and divine. It may fairly be called the apostolic creed." Peter's sermon, as usual, produced a deep impression upon his audience, but this time, instead of leading them to repentance, it aroused their bitter opposition, so that had it not been for the wise counsel of Gamaliel, one of the most prominent and influential members of the court, they would doubtless have increased their guilt by committing additional murder. But somewhat appeased by the quiet manner and wise words of Gamaliel, they content themselves with cruelly beating the prisoners and again commanding them to refrain from preaching. Once more at liberty, these faithful servants of God renew their labors in his cause without giving a moment's regard to the threatenings of the Sanhedrim. A few short weeks before this, such a command would have filled them with alarm; but now,

strengthened by divine grace, they go forth to their daily duty of teaching the people concerning their glorified Master, "rejoicing that they are counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."

But while these first heralds of the gospel are thus troubled with trials and persecutions from their enemies without the Church, a new source of perplexity originates among their friends within the Church. So rapidly had the membership increased that it now numbered several thousand, and it became impossible for the twelve apostles to attend to both the financial and spiritual interests of the people. Accordingly, we find here the introduction of an important class of officers into the Church; for although they are not expressly called "deacons," yet the Greek word used to set forth the functions of their office is sufficient to identify them with that class of Church officials which unquestionably existed in apostolic times (Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 8-13), and has ever since been retained by the various denominations of Christians, each

defining the functions of the office according to its interpretation of the apostolic model. The benevolence so conspicuous in the very first acts of the infant Church prompted its members to provide for their poor, whose wants were probably supplied daily from the funds of a common treasury, under the personal supervision of the apostles. But the number of disciples had now grown so large that strict impartiality in the distribution was well-nigh impossible, and without intending any injustice certain poor widows failed to receive their appropriate part. This led to murmuring and complaint on the part of the "Grecians," or foreign-born Jews who spoke the Greek language, against their Hebrew brethren who were natives of Palestine and spoke the Hebrew language; so that after all, without any real cause for dissatisfaction, the complaint may have originated in race jealousy or party spirit, which was carried even into the Church. The Greek word indicates that the discontent was of a "suppressed and whispered" character; and the apostles, like

prudent men, do not wait for a public outbreak, but having held a consultation, they call the entire Church together, and after explaining the impossibility of their properly performing so much work, and the great impropriety of their neglecting the preaching of the gospel in order to attend to the financial and temporal affairs of the Church, they suggest the appointment of seven pious and prudent men whose duty it shall be to distribute the charities of their brethren, and thus leave them free to give their whole time and attention to the spiritual interests of their fellowmen. These men were to be elected by the Church, and then that election ratified by the apostles as spiritual rulers divinely commissioned to perfect the organization of the Church. And they were to be men not only of good Christian character, but of unblemished reputation among their brethren; and not only good men, but wise and discreet. This suggestion made by the twelve apostles meets with the hearty approbation of the Church, who immediately select by ballot or otherwise

seven of their number whose names are all of Greek origin; and it is probable that in a spirit of conciliation the new officers were all selected from the company of complainants, the Grecians, who had manifested the spirit of discontent. Of five of the men thus chosen we know nothing further; but two of them, Stephen and Philip, afterward became prominent preachers of the gospel. After the election, those chosen were brought before the apostles in order that those divinely inspired officials might ratify the choice of the Church; then, after prayer for the divine guidance and blessing, they "laid their hands on" the newly elected officers, thus formally ordaining them to their important position. Peace and harmony being restored to the Church, it entered upon a new career of prosperity, and "the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly;" and the scene of crucifixion and death became also the scene of revival and eternal life. Among others thus converted to Christianity, a "great company of priests were obedient to the faith." The number of

priests at the return from Babylon was "four thousand two hundred and eighty-nine" (Ezra ii. 36-39), and must have been still larger at this time. But this is perhaps the last large ingathering of the priests, for after Stephen's trial made it evident that the gospel was in conflict with their worldly interests, few of them were added to the Church.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

The gospel proves to some "a savor of life unto life," and to others a "savor of death unto death."

Party spirit and denominational sectarianism are very different from true gospel piety.

Angels are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation."

"Duty is ours; results are God's."

"The wicked flee when no man pursueth; but the righteous are bold as a lion."

The apostles were tireless workers, and consequently successful preachers of the gospel.

The blood of Christ will rest upon every one either to cleanse or to condemn.

To have Christ as our "Saviour," we must also have him as our "Prince."

Repentance secures forgiveness and remission of sin.

To preserve the peace and promote the prosperity of the Church should be the controlling motive of every Christian.

It is neither right nor proper that the ministry should be secularized.

Church officers should not only be pious men, but they should also be prudent and of good reputation.

Harmony in the Church promotes its prosperity.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIRST MARTYRDOM.

THE Church had now reached the acme of external prosperity; but at this period, as Alford suggests, "another and important element in its testimony is brought out in the person of Stephen—viz., its protest against Pharisaism. This arrays against it that powerful and zealous sect, and henceforward it finds neither favor nor tolerance with either of the Jewish parties, but the increasing and bitter enmity of them both." Stephen being a Greek, and not trammelled with the prejudices of his Jewish brethren, grasped more clearly than they the plan of salvation in its universal character, and, as Farrar suggests, was the very first of the disciples to get the true idea of the spiritual kingdom. He saw that Christ had fulfilled the ceremonial law, and therefore it must perish; and that his death was not for Jews alone, and therefore their customs must be changed to accord

with the enlargement of the Church. So long as the Church was looked upon as still forming a part of Judaism, it was tolerated, and even met with favor from the more liberal Jews; but when once the declaration was made that it was designed to supersede that form of worship which had been handed down from sire to son from time immemorial, it awakened the opposition of all classes against both the preaching and the preacher. But Stephen had imbibed the true idea of Christianity, and so went forth aggressively to attack error and sin wherever found. He doubtless soon began the more responsible work of preaching the gospel, for he was a man of extraordinary spiritual gifts. He was possessed of eminent piety, and God honored him by conferring upon him miraculous power, so that he stands pre-eminent as being the first man to perform miracles outside of the apostles. God thus accredited his ministry by giving him divine credentials. As a Grecian, he naturally felt interested in his Grecian brethren, and so entered their synagogues and engaged with them in frequent

discussions, hoping thereby to bring some of them to a knowledge of the truth. According to the rabbinical books, there were upward of four hundred and fifty synagogues in Jerusalem. The Hebrews, or native Jews, worshiped together, and the foreign Jews naturally associated themselves in worship according to their dialects and other national affinities. Among other synagogues visited by Stephen was one composed of "men of Cilicia;" and doubtless here the earnest preacher first met the afterward famous "Saul of Tarsus" (Acts xxi. 39; xxii. 3), and by divine help succeeded in lodging in his mind the germ of truth that eventuated in his conversion from a bloody persecutor to the grandest preacher the world has ever known. In the synagogue services the leaders of any new school were generally permitted to set forth their opinions; hence, during Stephen's ministrations among his Hellenistic brethren he had frequent opportunities of presenting his views upon the design and scope of Christianity. In these discussions he spoke by divine inspiration (Luke xxi. 15) and

overwhelmed his adversaries by the power of his resistless eloquence and unanswerable logic. Smarting under a sense of conscious defeat, they seek to overthrow the arguments of their opponent, not by the force of justifiable debate, but by silencing the voice of the preacher in death. With this object in view, they bribe men to bear false witness against him, in the hope of establishing the charge of blasphemy, which was punishable with death. Blasphemy, under the Jewish law, was any endeavor to turn away the allegiance of the people from the one true God. This was the charge brought against Christ, and is now brought against the first of his servants who is called to seal his testimony with his blood. In addition to bribing false witnesses, the adversaries of Stephen "stirred up the people" against him by misrepresentations, thus seeking to alienate them from the Church toward which they were instinctively drawn. Having thus prejudged the case and pre-arranged the trial, they confidently arrest the preacher and hurry him before the same court, accused of

the same crime by which and upon which his Master was condemned only a few short weeks before. It was the duty of the court to punish perjury; but we here find it both inviting and encouraging it, for when the Sanhedrim had assembled, and all the preliminaries of the trial had been arranged, the bribed witnesses appear, and in the attempt to give convicting evidence are guilty of self-evident exaggeration, but at the same time bear unwitting testimony to the zeal and earnestness of the prisoner as a preacher of the gospel. While this false testimony is being given, the attention of the court is suddenly turned from the witnesses to the remarkable appearance of the prisoner, whose face is illuminated with a smile so calm and serene, so joyous and divine, that he seems almost transformed into an angel. After the charge has been established to the full satisfaction of the court, the prisoner is allowed to speak in his own defense. Less concerned about his personal safety than about the salvation of his fellow-men and the honor of his Master, his speech is more an argument

to prove the Messiahship of the crucified Nazarene than an effort to defend himself. But seeing that his words are lost upon his prejudiced hearers, he concludes abruptly with a short and direct application, in which he charges them with the willful and deliberate murder of God's Son. The argument was unanswerable, and the application unmistakable; but, instead of producing conviction of sin, the speech only enraged the audience, who "gnashed on the speaker with their teeth." The same language is used by our Lord to describe the finally lost (Matt. viii. 12, xiii. 42); so that, as Abbott suggests, "the passions of hell break forth in manifestations of malice and rage even on earth." No longer concerned about the action of the court, the prisoner stands "gazing up into heaven," as if contemplating the beauty of his future home; and "he saw the glory of God"—a fitting sequel to his address, whose key-note and constant refrain is, "The glory of God!" Neither painter's pencil nor poet's pen can ever adequately portray this scene, "in which the rage of hell

grins horrible from men as they sit condemned by their own frail prisoner, and see heaven beaming from his countenance and opening full upon his view." Stephen, in this hour of severe trial, receives a special and sensible manifestation of the divine presence, for he sees in the distance his glorified Redeemer, not sitting as he is usually represented (Matt. xxvi. 24; Mark xvi. 19; Eph. i. 20; Col. iii. 1), but "standing on the right-hand of God," as Chrysostom suggests, "as if ready to welcome and do honor to the first martyr for his cause." This sudden appearance of his beloved Master causes Stephen to forget his surroundings and to cry out in the wild ecstasy of his delight, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the-right hand of God!" According to Brown, "this is the only time that our Lord is by human lips called the "Son of man " after his ascension; but, full of the Holy Ghost, Stephen speaks now entirely by the Spirit, and is led to repeat the very words in which Jesus himself before this same council had foretold his glorification (Matt.

xxvi. 64), assuring them that that exaltation of the "Son of man," which they should hereafter witness to their dismay, was already accomplished." Stephen's exclamation was too much for the members of the Sanhedrim, for in it they recognized a repetition of the alleged blasphemy of the hated Nazarene; and no longer regarding the dignity of the court, with one spontaneous impulse and with mob violence they rush upon him and hurry out of the council chamber and beyond the city limits, in obedience to their ceremonial law (Lev. xxiv. 14; Num. xv. 35; 1 Kings xxi. 13). But they were not so scrupulous about observing the moral law, which forbade them to commit murder; for, having complied with the ceremonial requirements, they gladly put their prisoner to death, although no sentence had been passed upon him by the court, and if there had been they had no right to execute it (John xviii. 31); so that Stephen's death was a foul murder by a malicious mob, without one mitigating circumstance to palliate or excuse the fiendish cruelty.

Arriving at the place of execution, the witnesses who had been bribed to give testimony against the prisoner eagerly avail themselves of their legal privilege (?), Deut. xvii. 5-7, to hurl the first stones at the object of their envy and hate. In order the better to execute their bloody work, they give their long outer cloaks into the hands of "a young man whose name was Saul." This is the first glimpse we have of the afterward renowned hero of the Church; and in the language of the eloquent Brown: "How thrilling is this our first introduction to one to whom Christianity, whether as developed in the New Testament or as established in the world, owes more perhaps than to all the other apostles together! Here he is, perhaps having a seat already in the Sanhedrim, some thirty years of age, in the thick of this tumultuous murder of a distinguished witness for Christ, not only 'consenting unto his death,' but doing his own part of the dark deed." As the shower of stones begins to fall around the dying saint, he lifts his eyes to heaven and calls upon the name of his glori-

fied Master, not for deliverance for himself, but for forgiveness for his murderers; and so, "in presenting to Jesus almost the identical prayer which he himself had offered upon the cross, he renders to him divine worship in the most sublime form, and at the most solemn moment of his life." That this prayer was answered, we have evidence in the conversion of Saul; and if the "Church does owe Paul to the prayer of Stephen," as Augustine suggests, then, like Samson of old, the martyr accomplished more by his death than by his life. Notwithstanding his murderous surroundings, this noble servant of God had a peaceful death; for ere the echo of his prayer had died away, he quietly "fell asleep," as if to demonstrate the fact that under any circumstances

Jesus can make a dying-bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are,
While on his breast man leans his head
And breathes his life out sweetly there.

With their anger and malice satiated at last with the blood of their victim, the murderous mob, who had been led perhaps by the high-

priest (!) and Jewish officials, hurry from the scene and return to attend upon the ordinances of religious worship (?), while the friends of the murdered man tenderly gather up the bruised and bleeding corpse and place it in the silent chambers of the grave. As gleaned from Conybeare and Howson, "the death of Stephen is a bright passage in the earliest history of the Church, and the brightness which invests the scene of the martyr's last moments was more impressive from its contrast with all that has preceded it since the crucifixion of Christ. The first apostle who died was a traitor; the first Christians whose death is recorded were liars and hypocrites. The kingdom of the Son of man was founded in darkness and gloom, but a heavenly light re-appears with the martyrdom of Stephen. The revelation of such a character at the moment of death was the strongest of all evidences and the highest of all encouragements. Nothing could more confidently assist the divine power of the new religion; nothing could prophesy more surely the certainty of its final victory.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

A man "full of faith" is a man full of "power."

Infidelity is never "able to resist" the "wisdom" of Christianity.

Bigotry uses bribes and persecutions instead of arguments.

God's truth, like a two-edged sword, "cuts to the heart."

In order to "see the glory of God," one must be "full of the Holy Ghost."

Our brightest visions often appear in the midst of our severest trials.

True piety forgives and prays for its persecutors.

The Christian does not die; he merely "falls asleep" in Jesus, and "awakes in his likeness" amidst the glories of heaven.

Faith robs death of all its terrors, and paints upon the gloom of the grave the bright bow of hope.

No true life ever fails; for though a "Stephen" may die, his very death will result in the conversion of some "Saul of Tarsus."

CHAPTER X.

THE GOSPEL AND PERSECUTION.

THE murder of Stephen was the signal for beginning a general persecution against the Church. The martyr's death only intensified the thirst of the mob for blood, and they hurried away from his execution to seek other victims; for, according to Luke's record, "at that time there was a great persecution against the Church which was at Jerusalem," beginning doubtless on the very day of the martyr's death. "So long as the apostles, who were Hebrews, preached the gospel to the Hebrews, and the issue was between them and the Sadducees, who were powerful but unpopular, the feeling of the people was with the apostles; but when the gospel was preached by a Greek, and accompanied with the declaration that Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed, and the offer of mercy made to all nations, it became odious." But God overruled the very

wrath of his enemies for the glory of his name and the accomplishment of his purposes. Since the new religion was not designed to be local or national, but general and universal, persecution became a means of disseminating the gospel by scattering its adherents abroad over the world, and the idea of centralization in Jerusalem gradually gave place to one of extension and colonization; for wherever the disciples fled they scattered the seeds of truth and life. Thus Stephen's death, under the guiding hand of God, carried eternal life to multitudes of his fellow-men, and led to the fulfillment of the Master's prophecy that his disciples should be "witnesses for him not only in Jerusalem, but in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." (Acts i. 8.) While others were fleeing for their lives, the apostles remained with the mother Church to watch over its interests, because their presence was most needed there; and, strengthened by divine grace, they were ready now to die for the cause of the Lord whom they formerly deserted; and that they

could so remain in Jerusalem shows that the persecution was as yet the action of a mob. Another reason, perhaps, why they were permitted to remain was because they were Hebrews, and as such shared to some extent in the prejudices of their unconverted brethren (Acts ix. 14); whereas, when the era of preaching to the Gentiles was inaugurated, that duty was intrusted to Grecians. None of the twelve, so far as recorded, ever preached to the Gentiles, except Peter and John; so the anger of the Jews passed by the apostles and expended itself upon the offending Grecians, of whom Stephen was a conspicuous leader.

Prominent among the leaders of the persecution was the young and gifted but greatly misguided "Saul of Tarsus." So fierce was his anger against the Church that he spared neither age nor sex, but violently dragged to the gloomy prison all classes and conditions alike, as he afterward penitently confesses (Acts xxii. 4, xxvi. 9-11; 1 Cor. xv. 9; Gal. i. 13; Phil. iii. 6; 1 Tim. i. 13).

Besides Stephen, another of the "seven dea-

cons" attained eminence as a preacher of the gospel: this was Philip, who, driven from Jerusalem by the persecution, fled to Samaria, where he preached the glad tidings of salvation, and confirmed his teachings by many notable miracles (Acts viii. 67), in consequence of which many were converted to Christianity. The city of Samaria was some forty miles north of Jerusalem, and was built by Omri, King of Israel (1 Kings xvi. 23, 24). It was the capital of the ten tribes until the captivity. Samaria was conquered by Shalmaneser, King of Assyria, 721 B.C. (2 Kings xviii. 9, 10), and afterward repeopled by Esarhaddon (2 Kings xvii. 24), who subsequently sent a captive priest to teach the people "how they should fear the Lord." So that, although heathen, the Samaritans adopted in part the Jewish religion, and from time to time received renegade Jews, until they laid claim to Jewish blood (John iv. 12), and really occupied a sort of middle ground between Jew and Gentile. The fact of their receiving the gospel was therefore a matter of agreeable surprise to

the apostles, who, finding the spiritual kingdom thus gradually widening before them, and feeling their responsibility as the divinely constituted custodians and organizers of the Church, "send unto them Peter and John," for the purpose of inspecting the work and encouraging the new converts. Peter was evidently not pope at this time (?), nor even bishop, for he was one of the sent and not the sender. This is the last mention of John in the Acts, and the last but one in the New Testament (Gal. ii. 9), except as his name occurs in his own writings. He quietly drops out of notice while engaged in the first missionary work of the Church. The apostles in all their missionary work seem to have followed the example of their Master (Mark vi. 7; Luke x. 1), in sending two of their number together (Acts xiii. 2, xv. 39, 40). When Peter and John reached the scene of the Samaritan revival, and beheld the results of Philip's preaching, they were impressed with the need of the Spirit's presence to confer upon the converts supernatural and miraculous power; and being

themselves unable to impart the Holy Ghost, they engage in earnest prayer for his miraculous manifestations, and at once their prayer is answered. Among the professed converts was one Simon, a celebrated magician, who had long wielded great power over the Samaritans by means of his sorcery. Looking upon the missionaries as also magicians, only possessed of more knowledge of the hidden mysteries than he had obtained, he identifies himself with the Church in the hope of securing the secret of their great power, and observing that "through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given," he seeks to bribe them into revealing to him what he supposed to be only a sorcerer's secret. Peter, perceiving his object, and by divine guidance reading his character, administers a severe rebuke, and exhorts him to repent of his great sin and pray to God for pardon. The apostle saw clearly that he was unconverted, and so not only in danger himself, but liable to lead others astray by his corrupt influence. Alarmed perhaps by Peter's words, and believing that

he has some peculiar power with God, the sorcerer asks that the apostle will use his influence to avert the wrath of heaven; for his request evinces no penitence whatever, only a fear of punishment. What became of Simon is not certainly known. Tradition represents him as a leader of heresy, and the founder of the "Simonians" of the second century, whose creed was a mixture of Jewish religion with pagan philosophy. At any rate, his guilty conduct has been immortalized in the word "Simony," which denotes trafficking in sacred things, and his case sadly illustrates the condition of the spurious convert. He no doubt believed the gospel intellectually, accepted the creed of the Church, was baptized, and formally admitted as a member, and so far as human eye could see was a Christian. But when the mask was torn off by divine power it revealed no sorrow for sin, no faith in Christ, no consecration to God's service, but only a base desire to increase his own worldly interests.

The representatives from the Jerusalem Church, having completed the organization of

the Church in Samaria, begin their homeward journey, which they make a missionary tour, stopping at the various villages along their way to preach the gospel. It is interesting to note that one of the two who thus call down the Holy Ghost as a baptism of fire for the salvation of these Samaritan villagers was the very man who, only a few short months before, when carried away by his Jewish prejudices, had desired to call down upon them literal fire for their destruction. (Luke ix. 54.) While the apostles are thus returning to the mother Church to make their report, Philip, the deacon-preacher, continues his labors as a missionary, and by divine direction turns his footsteps southward toward "Gaza," a very old town (Gen. x. 19) in the extreme south of Canaan, some sixty miles from Jerusalem. In making this journey he was directed to avoid the public highway and take the lonely road through the "desert;" and although neither knowing the place of his destination nor the object of his journey, yet, in the exercise of a sublime faith almost rivaling that of Abra-

ham, he unhesitatingly obeys the strange command—strange, because it calls him away apparently without any reason, when he is engaged in the very midst of a most successful revival. But he has not gone far on his lonely journey before the divine purpose becomes manifest; for as he walks along, wondering why he is thus called away from Samaria, he sees in the distance a splendid chariot with gorgeous equipage and every thing to indicate wealth and power on the part of the owner. By divine direction the missionary approaches the chariot, and finds its occupant to be a high official of the Ethiopian court, who had been up to Jerusalem to engage in the services of Pentecost. He was doubtless a Jewish proselyte; and although, as the chief officer in Ethiopia, his time must have been largely engrossed with official business, yet he finds opportunity to make this long journey to worship God. He has left an example that business men might very profitably imitate. Having gone so far, he probably remained in Jerusalem some time after the Feast of Pentecost,

and was just now returning home. When Philip approaches he finds him busily engaged in reading the sacred Scriptures, as a substitute perhaps for the temple services, the loss of which he feels most keenly; or perhaps having witnessed the miracles performed by the apostles in Jerusalem at Pentecost, and knowing that they were attributed to the power of the crucified Nazarene, he is earnestly seeking light from the Old Testament prophecies to determine for himself whether or not the murdered man was the true Messiah. Accordingly, Philip finds him reading aloud, not the law nor Bible history, but the Old Testament gospel, especially that portion of it so strikingly fulfilled in the then recent tragedy of the cross. The passage of Scripture he was attempting to interpret (Isaiah liii. 7, 8) is one peculiarly important and obscure, except as interpreted in the light of its fulfillment; and hence the apparently abrupt question of the preacher is justified, especially as the form of it in the Greek implies a negative answer, and removes all harshness and seeming dis-

courtesy. Frankly admitting his ignorance and perplexity, the royal traveler invites the unknown stranger to a seat by his side, and eagerly listens to the exposition of the plan of salvation as it is carefully unfolded by his new-found friend. Taking the passage under consideration as a text, Philip shows how it had been fulfilled in the death of Christ, how that death brought life to every believer, and how that belief was to be attested by baptism. And as the chariot rolls on its way, the busy occupants earnestly discussing the plan of salvation, it suddenly brings them in sight of water, which is no sooner seen by the new convert than he eagerly exclaims: "Behold, water! what doth hinder me to be baptized?" The Greek suggests the idea of a small quantity of water, and the character of the country as a "desert" confirms the suggestion. All that was seen was doubtless some streamlet that trickled across the road; but it was to the renewed soul of the eunuch a joyful sight as furnishing him the opportunity of identifying himself with the Christian Church. To Phil-

ip's explanation of fitness he yields a ready assent, and joyfully professing his faith in the crucified Christ as a personal Saviour, he commands his servant to stop the chariot, and alighting therefrom he receives baptism at the hands of the missionary, and is at once admitted into the visible Church. Whether the rite was performed by immersion or sprinkling the language does not indicate, nor does it indicate any thing whatever in regard to the depth or extent of the water, though it suggests a small quantity. But if it is claimed that the language does imply immersion, then both preacher and convert were immersed, for what is affirmed of one is distinctly stated of the other: "They both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch." If, then, the language necessarily implies immersion in the one case, it does in the other; but if it does not necessarily imply it in the one case, it is unfair to claim it in the other. There were two sacraments given to the Christian Church: one intended to set forth Christ's redemptive work, the other to symbolize the

Spirit's cleansing power. The Lord's Supper has no reference to the Spirit, nor has baptism any direct reference to Christ. The mode of baptism is therefore directly deducible from its significance. These Oriental travelers, then, barefoot, or at any rate wearing only sandals, step down into the little brook as it crosses their way; and Philip, taking up some water in his hand, or on a branch plucked from some neighboring bush, reverently sprinkles it on his companion in imitation of his Jewish ancestors from time immemorial in the performance of their baptismal rites—or else pours it upon the head of the eunuch as an act symbolizing the baptism of the Holy Ghost, as he had witnessed it in Jerusalem and also in Samaria only a few short days before. Having thus accomplished the work for which he had been sent into the desert, Philip, under the guidance of the Divine Spirit, seeks another field of labor; while the eunuch, absorbed in his new joy, having found the Saviour and sealed his discipleship, hurries home to proclaim the glad tidings to his countrymen.

Philip, with true missionary spirit, preaches from village to village until he comes to Cesarea, where he makes his permanent home perhaps; at least we find him there some twenty or thirty years later, surrounded by an adult family. (Acts xxi. 8, 9.) This was not the Cesarea Philippi of the Gospels (Matt. xvi. 13, Mark viii. 27), but an ancient sea-port on the Mediterranean, some sixty miles northwest of Jerusalem, where Peter visited Cornelius (Acts x. 1), and where Paul was afterward imprisoned (Acts xxiii. 23). This is the last notice we have of Philip as an active preacher, while Stephen has been "called up higher," and John disappears after his return from Samaria; so that one by one the original founders of the Church are lost to sight, and others take their places. God's ways are thus often strange and mysterious, though always wisest and best. He permits persecution to invade the Church at Jerusalem, but by it he causes the gospel to be preached to the Gentiles. He allows Stephen to be put to death ere the initial note of the gospel for all men has died

away, but through the influence of that peaceful death he raises up Paul to become the grandest missionary the world has ever known. He removes Philip from the crowded streets and eager multitudes of Samaria to preach the gospel to a lone traveler in the desert, but by it, according to tradition, he causes the glad tidings of salvation to be proclaimed in Ethiopia. All these results, and in fact the whole work of missions in its ever-widening influence, may thus be directly traced to the heroism and fidelity of Stephen, thereby fully attesting the truth of the old adage, "The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church."

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

"Satan often makes missionaries where he tries to make martyrs."

Christians should go "everywhere preaching the gospel," and should preach the gospel wherever they go.

The salvation of sinners causes the Church to rejoice.

The Holy Ghost is given in answer to prayer.

The false professor of religion joins the company of believers for worldly and selfish interests.

Money and the worshipers of it will alike perish.

God's favor cannot be bought. His grace is free.

Creed and ceremonial observance, baptism and Church-membership, amount to nothing if the "heart is not right in the sight of God."

Repentance and prayer will secure pardon for sin.

Sin originates in the "thought of the heart."

Sinners are "in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."

Sinners are more anxious to escape from the penalty than from the power of sin.

Prayer in person is better than prayer by proxy.

True piety does not permit the business cares of life to prevent the worship of God.

The best substitute for public worship is the private study of God's word.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable.”

God’s providence furnishes opportunities for doing good.

It is better to read the Bible and not understand it than not to read it at all.

Humility and docility readily find a teacher.

The details of the crucifixion were given centuries before it occurred.

Earnest inquiry after truth receives a rich reward.

The Prophecies, as well as the Gospels, are full of Jesus.

True faith eagerly embraces the opportunity to confess Christ.

Faith in Christ as the Son of God is necessary to salvation.

The influence of the Christian’s death often results in the salvation of others.

CHAPTER XI.

SAUL OF TARSUS.

TURNING from the "desert road" in the south of Palestine to one in the extreme north, we encounter another traveler, whose character and mission stand out in such striking contrast with those of the pious Philip that one cannot fail to be deeply impressed; and instinctively the mind goes out in eager interest to know more of the stranger. A close scrutiny reveals features so striking that instantly the memory recalls them and associates them with the martyrdom of Stephen, as prominent in the scene of blood stands the manly form of this young stranger gazing with earnest interest into the uplifted face of the dying saint. Not only has he given his "vote" in the mock trial which results thus in the prisoner's death, but he voluntarily holds the long outer clothing of the executioners, that they may not be hindered in their bloody

work. Amidst such dark and forbidding scenes the world has its first introduction to the grandest man who ever trod upon its soil or found a grave beneath its surface; and from this introduction something may be gleaned in regard to his present character and condition. If not a member of the Sanhedrim at this time, he must have been elected thereto soon afterward, for he himself tells us (Acts xxvi. 10) that when the Christians were put to death he "gave his voice against them;" from which it is but natural to infer that he was a member of the supreme court of judicature. This explains his eager interest in persecuting the followers of Christ, whom he regarded as an impostor. His purpose was not to oppose religion, but to destroy what he considered an heretical sect, so that his very disposition to persecute the Church was itself an evidence of his desire to honor God; and he tells us that he obtained forgiveness for his sinful conduct because "what he did was through ignorance." The entire history of this grand hero of the cross it would be interesting to

trace, but of his early life we have only a few fragments preserved. From these we learn that he was of the tribe of Benjamin. (Rom. ii. 1; Phil. iii. 5.) He was born in "Tarsus, a city of Cilicia," in matters of education and learning the rival of Athens and Alexandria, the seats of the great universities of that day. In the providence of God he thus enjoyed the most favorable opportunities for acquiring a liberal education in the arts and sciences, and in his subsequent life we have abundant evidence that he made good use of these opportunities. His parents were zealous Jews, and carefully instilled into his infant mind the rudimentary truths of their religion; but not content with this, they sent him to Jerusalem, the capital city of their nation, and placed him in the school of Gamaliel (Acts xxii. 3), perhaps the most celebrated Jewish teacher of that day. Educated thus in the strictest school of the Pharisees, by the greatest and most orthodox of teachers, he was "taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers," and "receiving from the univer-

sity of Jerusalem the diploma of rabbi, was subsequently elected to the Sanhedrim as a scribe." He was thus thoroughly educated in both science and theology, and was well qualified for the important position he was afterward called to occupy in the Church; and by his labors and letters he left a broader and deeper impress upon its history and destiny than all his co-laborers combined—a fact which stands out conspicuously as a most powerful argument in favor of an educated ministry. For many years the history of the Church crystallizes around the name of Paul; and perhaps more of her success in the world is due to him than to any other man who ever lived; and yet, physically considered, few men ever had more hinderances than he. Tradition represents him as having a frail physique and infirm health, and the few glimpses into his private life given us by Luke, his companion and physician, seem to confirm the correctness of the opinion. He speaks of a "thorn in the flesh," of which he was exceedingly anxious to rid himself. Some suppose that the

trouble was an affliction of the eyes, caused perhaps, by the dazzling light that blinded him at Damascus; but whatever the "thorn" was, it was doubtless some physical infirmity which gave him great annoyance. In most striking contrast with the frailty of his body stands the strength of his intellect. The few fragments of his speeches which we find recorded prove that as an orator the world has seldom seen his equal, and perhaps never his superior. His speech before Agrippa and his argument on "Mars' Hill" have long challenged the admiration of thoughtful men, and clearly prove that his tongue could utter words of burning eloquence as well as of sound logic; while his Epistles are filled with the sublimest truths and profoundest thoughts to be found in the writings of any author. By birth he inherited the proud distinction and high privilege of Roman citizenship, by virtue of which fact he escaped danger, and perhaps death, upon more than one occasion (Acts xvi. 37-39, xxii. 26-28); and being both Jew and Roman, he was known by two names. As a

Jew he was called by his parents "Saul," meaning "the desired one;" but as a Roman citizen he received also the name of "Paul," meaning "the little one," a nickname given him perhaps because of his low stature and frail physique—given perchance in derision by the haughty Romans to the little Jew—but, like many other nicknames, it has since become sacred and immortal, known and loved wherever the history of the grand man who bore it found its way. From his very infancy he was consecrated to God, and even before his conversion to Christianity his life was conspicuously exemplary and rigidly conformed to all the requirements of the Mosaic law. (Phil. iii. 5, 6.) His moral character was above reproach, and shines resplendent by the side of that of many who expect by virtue of their morality to gain the divine favor and enter heaven. Yet it was far from sufficient to satisfy the claims of a perfect law, as he afterward found and penitently confessed. How vain, then, are the hopes of those who confessedly fall below the measure of Paul's morality! At the time indicated

in the opening of this chapter he stands forth as a mature man in the very prime of life, of noble birth and unblemished character, an excellent scholar and eloquent orator, occupying a seat in the supreme court of the Jewish nation, honored by his countrymen and flattered by his friends, and yet esteeming all as of secondary importance in the intense zeal which he felt for the honor of his God. That this was his one absorbing thought is clearly evident from the conspicuous part he took in persecuting the Church which he regarded as an enemy to the God of his fathers. Not content with apprehending and incarcerating the helpless Christians of Jerusalem, he goes to the proper authorities and secures the right to pursue and arrest the fugitive disciples who are fleeing hither and thither in search of safety; and, as if to prove beyond question his bitter hatred of the cause of Christ, he undertakes the long, toilsome journey of one hundred and forty miles, from Jerusalem to Damascus, for the avowed purpose of securing certain refugee Christians who have there

found an asylum. It was upon this memorable journey that the whole current of his life was changed, and the proud persecutor was transformed into the very prince of preachers; and henceforth he flashes, meteor-like, from city to city and from country to country in the intense ardor of his love and the impetuosity of his zeal for the very cause which he had hitherto despised and sought to destroy. There are three accounts of this remarkable conversion given in the inspired record (Acts ix. 1-18, xxii. 4-13, xxvi. 11-15), which are all, however, essentially the same. From these we learn that Saul, in his eager desire to destroy the Church, was hurrying along with certain confederates toward Damascus for the purpose of arresting the Christians who had there found a safe retreat, as they supposed, from the angry jealousy of the Jews. Damascus was so far removed from Jerusalem that it was doubtless considered a safe home for the persecuted followers of Christ, and large numbers of them, perhaps, fled thither. At any rate, we know that many Jews resided there, for

they had several synagogues which were subject to the authority of the Sanhedrim, and it was to these that Saul was sent to arrest any Christians that might be found among them, and carry them up to Jerusalem for trial. By his commission he was authorized to arrest women as well as men, and three times women are mentioned (Acts viii. 3, ix. 2, xxii. 4) as the objects of Paul's persecution, as if to indicate the intensity of his cruelty. The city to which the fierce persecutor was journeying is worthy of a moment's notice. It was the oldest city in the world—founded, according to Jewish tradition, by Uz, the great-grandson of Noah, and is pointed out as the scene of Abel's murder. It was certainly as old as Abraham (Gen. xiv. 15), and has its name inseparably associated with the miraculous cure of Naaman (2 Kings v. 12), and rendered immortal by its connection with the thrilling events of Saul's conversion. It was the ancient capital of Syria, situated in a plain of great fertility, and still exists as an important city with a population of upward of a hundred thousand. To-

ward this ancient and interesting city Saul and his companions were journeying about noon, when suddenly there flashed forth a light from heaven surpassing in its dazzling brightness even the midday glare of the Syrian sun. So intense was the light that it could not be confounded with any mere natural phenomenon, and it came unmistakably from heaven; for in the midst of it the amazed persecutor caught that vision of Jesus (1 Cor. ix. 1, xv. 8), which so impressed itself upon his mind and heart that ever afterward he saw nothing else and cared for nothing else. Like the philosopher who looked upon the sun until he could see nothing but its fiery, burning disk, so Paul, absorbed in the contemplation of this enrapturing vision of the glorified Redeemer, was ever after blind to all the attractions of the world. As the light flashed upon the toil-worn travelers, they fell prostrate to the earth; and as the trembling persecutor lay thus helpless, with his eyes riveted upon the heavenly vision, he heard a voice—clear, articulate, and distinct—addressing him in the Hebrew lan-

guage and calling him by his Hebrew name. The voice was heard by his companions, but the words were understood by himself alone, and they sunk deep into his conscience-stricken soul. The speaker unmistakably identifies himself with his suffering disciples, and demands why he is thus persecuted. Vaguely realizing who the speaker is, but overwhelmed with astonishment, the trembling persecutor in faltering accents asks, "Who art thou, Lord?" and instantly the reply is given, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." Thus his guilty conduct is represented in its most appalling character; and as if to convince him of the futility of his efforts to overthrow the Church, our Lord calls himself by the name of his humiliation, and shows him that the hated Nazarene is now enthroned in glory, and so far beyond the reach of mere finite power. The clamors of his conscience overwhelm him as he begins to realize that he is addressed by no other than the very one whose cause he was seeking to destroy; and as one bewildered, vaguely realizing that something is required

of him, but he knows not what, he asks in faltering tones, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" This question clearly indicates that he recognized the speaker as the hitherto hated Nazarene; and seeing him thus enthroned in glory and possessed of infinite power, he is convinced that his past life, both in thought and deed, has been one long-protracted mistake, which he is now anxious to rectify. He then seeks to know the divine will, ready to obey it whatever it may be; but the circumstances are unfavorable for a full revelation of that will, nor indeed is he prepared yet to receive it. He must be allowed time for calm and careful consideration, and so he is directed to arise and go into Damascus that he may there learn his duty from God's servant. He was to enter Damascus for a purpose and in a manner far different from his original expectations. He expected to go as the proud leader of a gorgeous pageant, but instead he is led in penitent humiliation and helpless blindness; for when the glorious vision of his new Master had vanished, the rich effulgence

of his presence had shut out all other objects, and instead of seeking the company of his haughty countrymen, he doubtless secures through his companions some quiet lodging-place, and there he remains for three days wrapped in midnight darkness, neither eating nor drinking. Thus cut off from the world, having neither Christian communion nor Jewish sympathy, he gives himself up to earnest thought. With bitter regret memory wanders back over the scenes of the past, while imagination tries to forecast the future. He thinks not only of what he has done, but of what he must now give up. On the one hand are grouped his ambition, his rank, his wealth, his worldly honor, and his former friends; on the other stand difficulty, danger, and death—but with them, and shedding its heavenly luster over them, is the glorious vision of the risen Redeemer. For three long, lonely days he is thus given up to an intense inward conflict, but at the end of that time his decision is firm and unalterable. He has “counted the cost,” and deliberately made his choice. Esteeming

the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of the world—"choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season"—he henceforth "determines to know nothing but Christ and him crucified." His very blindness is a mercy, shutting him out from the world that he may the better consider the issues before him. But this season of trial and preparation ended, the Lord sends his servant Ananias to make known to him his duty; for God has ordained that men shall learn the truth from the lips of their fellow-men rather than directly from himself or through angelic agency, as attested both here and in the case of Cornelius. (Acts x. 5, 6.) Knowing full well the object of Saul's mission to Damascus, Ananias fears to obey the divine command and begins to remonstrate with God. Patiently he listens to his timorous servant, and then explains to him that he has chosen the proud persecutor for a special purpose, and gives him evidence that he is already a changed man, because even at that moment he is en-

gaged in prayer. Thus assured, Ananias starts out, and following the minute directions which God had given him, he soon finds the penitent persecutor and reveals to him the plan of salvation and a knowledge of the divine will; and as the heavenly light dawns upon his darkened mind his blinded eyes are opened to see again the light of the natural world. Thus prepared for membership in the Christian Church, Paul receives the rite of initiation at the hands of the godly Ananias, and affords at least one example which the immersionists cannot claim, for he was undoubtedly "baptized standing up," as we learn from the record in the original Greek. Now a member of the Christian Church, with his mind relieved of its terrible load of conscious guilt, the humble disciple has time once more to think of the wants of his body, and partakes of food to counteract his physical prostration. Paul's conversion is generally considered as exceptional, and it was undoubtedly remarkable; yet it has many features in common with every other conversion. Like many another penitent, he

spent three long, weary days in an intense struggle with himself; and when at last he gained the victory, and the light dawned upon his troubled soul, it was through the influence of divine truth as unfolded and explained by one of God's ministering servants.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

God's power can triumph over man's pride.
Jesus identifies himself with his people:
their cause is his cause.

"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"
should be the constant prayer of every one.

Providence arranges for answering the questions of earnest inquirers after salvation.

God reveals himself to one, while he conceals himself from another.

Leaders in other things must often be led in spiritual matters.

"Man proposes, but God disposes."

Fasting, meditation, and prayer are good for the soul.

The Lord knows his people by name, and communicates with them individually.

The Lord not only understands, but he or-

ders the details of every circumstance in life.

Prayer is the exponent and index of piety.

God works through human instrumentality.

The best of men are but human, and often evince a want of faith.

God chooses his own instruments, and assigns them their position.

Patient suffering glorifies God, as well as active service.

Christians are all brethren.

God can defend his friends and convert his foes.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PERSECUTOR A PREACHER.

HENCEFORTH the history of the apostolic Church crystallizes around the name of Paul, and he becomes the honored champion of Christianity wherever the blood-bathed banner of the cross is unfurled. In fact, his conversion marks a new era in the history of the world, for by his efforts the benign influence of the gospel is spread abroad among the Gentiles, whereas up to this time it had been confined to the Jews. Others were interested in making known the glad tidings to their fellow-men, but "in labors he was more abundant" than they all. He had a sublime conception of duty and of the solemn significance of life. He felt that it was not a mere idle dream, but a solemn reality in which stupendous issues were involved. He felt that man was not an ephemeral being—a mere butterfly, to dance for a moment in the sunlight and then to pass away forever—but that he was pos-

sessed of an immortal nature, before which was opened up the sublimest possibilities. He was one of those positive characters whose whole soul was thrown into whatever he undertook; hence he entered upon the service of his new Master with all the intense ardor and quenchless zeal of his energetic nature. The news of his conversion to Christianity, and the strange, startling events connected with it, doubtless filled Damascus with a flutter of excitement. His Jewish companions were overwhelmed with amazement and bitter disappointment that their leader had abandoned their cause and joined the ranks of those whom they sought to destroy, while the Church, after the first feeling of incredulity had passed away, were filled with joy and gratitude, as they welcomed the new convert to a place in their membership, and began to realize that their cruel enemy was to become their noblest defender. This soon became evident, for scarcely had his name been entered upon the Church records ere he began the grand work of preaching the very gospel which he had

formerly despised. He knew full well from his own experience that it was "the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation" to the believer, and he was eager to publish the glad news to others. There was no need of delay in his case, for long years before, in the universities of Tarsus and Jerusalem, he had received an education that fully qualified him for this responsible position; and before others can plead his example for hurrying into the ministry, they ought to be able to show his qualifications. The theme of his preaching from the very outset was "Christ and him crucified;" for as he boldly entered the Jewish synagogues he earnestly sought to convince his deluded countrymen that Jesus, whom he had formerly persecuted, was no other than their long-promised Messiah; and he spoke with such resistless power that they could not answer his arguments. For awhile they sat spell-bound — overcome with amazement at the great change which had occurred in the character and conduct of the former persecutor, while he—on fire with

love for his new Master—gained strength with every effort he put forth. The more he preached the stronger grew his convictions, the clearer his apprehension of the truth, the firmer his resolution, and the greater his power and influence. His knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures enabled him to present the prophecies in regard to the Messiah along-side of their fulfillment in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth; and by piling argument upon argument his train of reasoning became absolutely irresistible, to the manifest confusion of his Jewish antagonists. This, naturally enough, awakened their resentment, and they turned against him the argument of persecution, which he himself had formerly taught them to use. Thus he was permitted to preach in Damascus only a few short days; but the triumph of divine grace, which had transformed the proud persecutor into the acknowledged champion of the Damascus Church, could not fail to make a deep impression upon many hearts. Judaism was doubtless shaken to its very center, while Christianity received

an impetus that carried it triumphantly forward. With increasing alarm the Jewish rulers contemplate the wonderful influence of the new preacher, and they determine to silence by death what they cannot refute by argument. But their foul plot is discovered by the Church; and although the city gates are carefully watched day and night by a military guard obtained for the purpose, his friends find a way to secure his escape (2 Cor. xi. 33) by letting him down in a basket from one of the windows overhanging the wall. (Josh. ii. 15; 1 Sam. xix. 12.) As he thus flees under cover of darkness from danger and death, he doubtless recalls his own guilty conduct in persecuting the Church, and receives the initial lesson of "how great things he must suffer" for Christ's sake. It may have been at this time that he sought shelter in Arabia (Gal. i. 17) from the storms of persecution. His restless spirit would not allow him to remain long unemployed, and he returns again to Damascus; but finding the Jews still determined to kill him, he hurries off to

Jerusalem to see the apostles and to preach the gospel to his former companions and friends. The Church, well acquainted with his former character, was distrustful of his professed piety, and refused to receive him. They suspected that he was acting the part of a spy in order that he might the more successfully carry out his plans of persecution. Such a reminder of his guilty conduct, only a few short weeks before, doubtless overwhelmed him with a sense of shame and humiliation; and while he is thinking how he is to convince the Church that he has been truly converted, he providentially meets an old acquaintance and former school-mate, to whom he recounts all the facts of the strange events at Damascus and makes known his desire to enter the Jerusalem Church. This boyhood companion of his was a native of Cyprus, only a few hours' sail from Cilicia. Together the two young men perhaps had attended the university at Tarsus, and now in this hour of his severe need Paul finds a true friend in Barnabas, who has come to occupy a prominent and in-

fluent place in the Church. (Acts iv. 36, 37.) He believed implicitly what his friend told him, and he appears in the presence of the Church in his behalf. He recounts the strange events connected with Paul's conversion, his commission to preach the gospel as received from the glorified Redeemer himself, and the wonderful results which attended his preaching in Damascus, and in consequence of this interposition he is at length received into the fellowship of the Christian brotherhood at Jerusalem. As the Church gradually awakes to the realization that her most cruel foe has become by the transforming grace of God her most valiant defender, she doubtless lifts her voice to heaven in grateful acknowledgment of the divine goodness, and accords to the young convert a warm welcome to all her exalted privileges. Amidst these sacred associations Paul remains for a few days, learning important lessons from the apostles; but not long can he be kept silent, for soon his eloquent voice is heard in the very synagogues, doubtless, where he had met the sainted Ste-

phen in earnest debate. Then he spoke with withering scorn of the hated Nazarene, but now, standing perhaps in the presence of the same audience, he boldly maintains the truth which he had then resisted; and he maintains it with such burning eloquence and resistless logic as to overwhelm his auditors with astonishment. Unable to meet his arguments, they seek to silence his voice by putting him to death; and thus he is once more reminded of his own former cruelty in persecuting the Church. But again God's providence interposes in his behalf, and through the agency of his brethren he escapes danger, and is sent by authority of the Church to his old home in Tarsus. How long he remained there we do not know, but we may well conjecture that his time was busily employed in seeking to lead relatives and friends to a knowledge of Christ in the pardon of their sins. His preference would have been to remain in Jerusalem and preach the gospel where he had so earnestly sought to destroy it, and gladly would he have braved danger and death in order to counter-

act the evil influence that he had once exerted there; but God's will was otherwise. (Acts xxii. 18), and notwithstanding his protest against leaving Jerusalem he is divinely directed to go and preach the gospel to the Gentiles. In the persecution that was aroused by his preaching God opened up the way for his departure and for his return to his native land. The object of their hate being thus removed, the rage of the Jews soon subsides, and peace and quiet reign throughout the borders of the Church. This was partly because the principal persecutor was now a pious preacher, and partly because the Emperor Caligula attempted to force the Jews into idolatry (Josephus's "Antiquities," xviii. 8-29), which, naturally enough, turned their attention away from the Christians. In consequence of this reign of peace both converts and churches were multiplied and advanced rapidly in spiritual knowledge and practical piety.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

The true convert seeks the society of Christians.

God's grace can make a faithful preacher out of the fiercest persecutor.

The world is often astonished at the wonders achieved by divine grace.

Spiritual strength is measured by spiritual exercise.

Earnest preaching arouses opposition, and often persecution.

Christian sympathy seeks to succor fellow-disciples in times of trouble.

Men's actions are often misunderstood, and their motives misinterpreted.

"A friend in need is a friend indeed."

The true convert seeks to correct and counteract the evil influence of his former life.

When Christians "walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost," both churches and converts are multiplied.

CHAPTER XIII.

FIRST-FRUITS FROM THE GENTILES.

IN recording the conversion of Paul, which was intimately connected with the death of Stephen and the subsequent persecution of the Church, the historian necessarily passes over other interesting and important events which occurred about the same time, to some of which he now refers. During the peaceful and prosperous period of the Church resulting, in part at least, from Saul's conversion, Peter—not as pope, nor even as bishop, but as the representative of the apostles, and sent out by apostolic authority—visits the churches which persecution had planted in various places, for the purpose of encouraging and instructing them. This journey was not so much a missionary tour as one of visitation among churches already established. In the course of his travels he came to Lydda, called in the Old Testament Lod (1 Chron. viii. 12, Ezra

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ii. 33; Neh. xi. 35), a town on the road to Jerusalem some seven or eight miles from Joppa. Here he found a certain man named Eneas, who had been paralyzed for eight years. Nothing is known of this man except what is here stated, but he was most probably a disciple of Christ; and Peter, recognizing the simplicity and strength of his faith, proceeds to test it by giving him a command, which if obeyed will result in his cure. He does not claim to be even the instrumental cause of the cure, but gives all the honor to his Master, whom he thus proclaims to be the true Messiah. He commands the paralytic to perform an act which under other circumstances would have been impossible; but now, in the exercise of a faith sublime in its simplicity, he puts forth the effort to obey, and by so doing the act of faith is rewarded, and he is completely cured. This miracle attested unmistakably the apostle's divine commission, and naturally enough attracted the attention of the entire community, in consequence of which there was a great spiritual awakening and ingathering into the

Church. While Peter was thus engaged in the revival at Lydda, the Lord was preparing the way for his servant to perform another and still more notable miracle. In the neighboring town of Joppa there lived a noble Christian woman whose name had become a household word throughout all that country, and who in the mysterious providence of God now sickened and died. The name of this woman was Tabitha, or Dorcas, meaning a "gazelle"—a favorite symbol in the East for beauty (Solomon's Song ii. 9-17, iv. 5, vii. 3)—a name especially appropriate in this case; for if Dorcas was not beautiful in person she was at least so in character. She was one of those earnest Christians whose religion was not confined to her heart, but extended to her hands, and kept them busy in efforts to alleviate the sufferings of those around her—the imperfect tense, as used by the historian, denoting that it was her habitual practice to be thus engaged. The death of such a woman is ever looked upon as a public calamity; therefore, when the news of Tabitha's death spread abroad, many hearts

and homes were filled with unfeigned sorrow. Kind friends gather around her bedside and tenderly perform the last sad services preparatory to her burial; and then, as one after another come to take a last look upon the beloved face, these sorrowing ones gather in little companies around the room, and in whispered accents engage in earnest conversation. Some one has spoken of the miraculous cure of the paralyzed Eneas, and has suggested that possibly Peter might even restore Dorcas to life. The suggestion at first seems almost impious, yet the more they think of it the more anxious they become to act upon it; and at last they determine to send for the eminent preacher, that he may at least come and visit them in their sorrow. No sooner have the messengers made known the object of their mission than Peter signifies his willingness to accompany them; and when they at length reach the home of the deceased Dorcas, numerous evidences of the high esteem in which she was held are visible on every hand, as the weeping widows recount

her deeds of charity and exhibit the articles of clothing which she had made for them with her own hands. After speaking to the assembled crowd words of comfort and encouragement, the apostle requests them to leave the room, that he may be alone. Then, kneeling down by the side of the dead, he lifts his heart in earnest prayer to God, like Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 20) and Elisha (2 Kings iv. 33) of olden times; and having received assurance that his prayer is answered, he turns to the corpse, and calling the deceased woman by name bids her arise, when she immediately opens her eyes like one awakening from peaceful slumbers, and sits up as an evidence of complete restoration not only to life, but to health. Knowing the joy that would thrill the hearts of her sorrowing friends, he hastens to call them, that they may now mingle their tears of gladness, as they had previously mingled those of sorrow and bitter grief. A miracle so notable would naturally attract the attention of the people and become the theme of conversation throughout the surrounding country, so that

wherever the apostle preached multitudes flocked to hear him; and a gracious revival was the result of the miracle at Joppa, as had previously been the case at Lydda, in consequence of which Peter prolonged his visit there "many days."

Joppa was an ancient sea-port on the Mediterranean coast, where were landed the materials for building both the first and second temples (2 Chron. ii. 16, Ezra iii. 7), and where Jonah embarked when attempting to flee from the Lord (Jonah i. 3). During his visit to this town Peter made his home not with Dorcas, as we might naturally expect, but with "one Simon, a tanner." Among the Jews this occupation was held in dishonor on account of the contact with the skins of dead animals, which rendered them ceremonially unclean—so that Peter must have already laid aside some of his Jewish prejudices, and was destined while under this man's roof to receive a lesson that would relieve him of still more of them, for a new era now dawns upon the Church. Hitherto Jews and Jewish prose-

lytes alone had been admitted as members, but henceforth the doors are thrown wide open so as to receive Jew and Gentile alike; and Peter, the "apostle of the circumcision," is in the providence of God chosen to initiate this movement, as he had before done in the case of the Jews. During his sojourn at Joppa the way had been providentially prepared for the introduction of the gospel into the family of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, now resident at Cesarea; and so God again precedes his servant and prepares the way for him to preach the gospel at Cesarea as he had just done at Joppa. Cornelius was a common name among the Romans, but concerning the individual here mentioned nothing is known further than what is recorded in this conversion. He occupied an important office in the Roman army, and was a man of conspicuous piety, cheerfully obeying the divine will so far as he had any knowledge of it. His religion was of that practical character which is always well-pleasing to God, and not only restrained the evil impulses of his own nature,

but extended to his family and all under his authority, whom he held in check and taught the fear of the Lord. This devotion on the part of an untaught Gentile finds especial favor in God's sight, and is rewarded by a fuller revelation of the divine will. In the midst of his devotions he is astonished by the presence of an angelic messenger, who assures him that his worship is accepted of God, and directs him to send to Joppa for Peter in order that he may receive fuller information in regard to his duties and his privileges. He was living up to the light he had, and so his desire to know more of the divine will is fully rewarded.

God had thus prepared him for receiving the truth by awakening within him a desire to know it, and by directing him how he might learn it; and at the same time he had prepared Peter, by means of a vision, for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. During his sojourn in the house of Simon he fell into a "trance," and while in this state received an object-lesson well calculated to correct his misappre-

hensions and remove his prejudices in regard to the Gentiles. By this vision he learned the great, important lesson that "God is no respecter of persons," and that he estimates people by their character rather than by their nationality; but in order that the object of the vision might not be misunderstood, the Spirit of God apprises him of the advent of the messengers from Cornelius, and bids him go with them at once. Going down from the house-top where he had seen the vision, he finds the men standing at the gate, and learning the object of their mission, he immediately makes preparations to accompany them. On the afternoon of the day he received the heavenly message Cornelius started his servants to Joppa in search of Peter, and following the minute directions divinely given, they readily found him. Reaching Joppa on the second day, and remaining overnight, they started homeward on the third day accompanied by Peter, and arrived at the house of Cornelius on the fourth day, where they found not only the immediate family of the centurion, but

also his "kinsmen and near friends," assembled to hear the message of salvation from the lips of the expected preacher. Both Cornelius and Peter had received supernatural instructions, and each had thus been divinely prepared for his part in this interesting drama. After mutual explanations in regard to the visions they had seen, and the providential way in which they were brought face to face, Peter begins to unfold to his interested audience the wonderful story of God's redeeming love; and perhaps he never attempted to preach under more favorable and encouraging circumstances. His audience felt that they were in the immediate presence of God for the purpose of learning his will, and they were not only willing but eager and anxious to hear the words of his messenger. He begins by renouncing his own long-cherished Jewish prejudice in regard to the Gentiles, and declares that the doctrine of reconciliation through an appointed Saviour was intended for them as well as for the Jews. His auditors, though heathens, were somewhat familiar with the

life-history of Jesus of Nazareth; hence he only briefly rehearses the prominent facts in that eventful life. He refers to his public consecration by the Holy Ghost, his power to work miracles, his constant efforts to bless humanity, his cruel death and glorious resurrection, and to the great fact that the whole body of prophecy converges toward and unites in establishing this one central, fundamental truth—that “whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.” This glorious news he and his companions were commissioned and commanded to preach to all the world—to Jew and Gentile alike. And when the welcome tidings fell upon the ears of his audience, joy was awakened in their hearts, and the Holy Ghost came upon them with unmistakable power to the manifest astonishment of the Jews who had accompanied Peter from Joppa. The apostle had preached in Jerusalem to the thousands assembled there when the Holy Ghost first came upon the Church on the memorable day of Pentecost; and now, seeing the same miraculous power given to the

Gentiles, he can hesitate no longer, but commanding the rite of baptism to be administered unto them, he receives them into the fellowship of the Christian Church. At the earnest solicitation of the new converts Peter doubtless tarries for a few days at Cesarea, that he may indoctrinate them more fully; and when he returns to Jerusalem he finds his Jewish brethren, who have already learned what he has done, standing ready not only to criticise but to condemn his conduct. In self-vindication he recounts in full the whole occurrence from its very beginning, and shows how God had unmistakably sanctioned the work by giving the Gentiles the Holy Spirit and the same miraculous power that he had granted to the Jews. By this statement he not only vindicated himself before the Jerusalem Church, but brought joy and gladness to their hearts because God was thus manifestly extending the borders of his kingdom and the glory of his name.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

Christians are "saints"—those whom God

has "separated" from the world; they are *in* it but not *of* it, and therefore not to be conformed to it.

Nothing is accidental. God orders every circumstance in life. He brings helpless Eneas and helpful Peter together. He furnishes both the agent and the object.

True piety exalts the Saviour at the sacrifice of self.

The healed sinner is a living argument in favor of Christianity, and by his very presence attracts others to the cross.

A life "full of good works and alms-deeds" is but the natural exponent of true, vital piety.

The human heart sighs for sympathy and solace in the dark hour of suffering and sorrow.

It is better to embalm the name in the memories of the poor by deeds of active charity than to engrave it on tablets of brass or monuments of marble.

Woman's work has been conspicuous in every age of the Church.

The death of the active, useful Christian brings sorrow to many hearts.

God answers the prayer of faith.

God's wonderful works cannot be hid.

Secret prayer brings us into communion with heaven.

Earnest prayer and faithful service are "had in remembrance in the sight of God."

The true worshiper receives the gospel message as from God.

God now knows no national favoritism.

Peace and reconciliation with God come through Jesus Christ.

"He went about doing good" is a truthful epitome of our Lord's life, and is the highest encomium that can be pronounced upon any man.

The disciples were afforded the most favorable opportunities for knowing that their Master was raised from the dead. They are both competent and credible witnesses.

Christ is Judge as well as Saviour.

Christ is the central object of the Prophecies as well as of the Gospels.

The offer of salvation is bounded only by a broad, universal "whosoever."

The Holy Spirit accompanies the preaching of the gospel, and makes it effective to the salvation of sinners.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FRUITS OF PERSECUTION.

THE persecution which originated at the death of Stephen became a fruitful source of interesting events in the history of the Church; and the historian has frequent occasion in the course of his record to go back to it as a sort of starting-point, or focal center, from which these events radiate. Contrary to the expectations of the enemies of the Church, this persecution served to build up and scatter it abroad in places hitherto unknown; for the fleeing disciples went in every direction, and wherever they went they scattered the seeds of truth and life. Philip went to Samaria, and performed a great work there. Others "traveled as far as Phenicia," a narrow tract of country on the Mediterranean north of Palestine, containing the famous cities of Tyre and Sidon. Others still went to Cyprus, a large island in the Mediterrane-

an, and to Antioch, the capital of Syria, some three hundred miles north of Jerusalem. Some of these fugitive Christians were only proselytes to Judaism; and not sharing the narrow national prejudices of their Jewish brethren, they were more ready to believe that the gospel was designed for all men, and gladly began to publish the tidings of salvation to the Gentiles, and to proclaim that the Lord Jesus was none other than the long-promised Messiah, the Saviour of the ruined race. That their preaching was in accordance with the Divine will soon became manifest in the conversion of large numbers, who gladly renounced their pagan faith and practices to adopt the ordinances of Christianity. This is the first recorded ingathering of any considerable extent from the Gentile world, for the conversion of Cornelius and his household was doubtless limited to a small number; but here so many were received that a strong Church was organized, in which the Gentile element largely predominated. The news of what was thus occurring in Antioch soon reached the

ears of the Church in Jerusalem, producing upon different hearts widely differing impressions. Some were filled with joy and gladness that God was thus extending the borders of his kingdom and the blessings of his Church, but there were others in whose minds the narrow Jewish prejudice asserted its power over the benign instincts and impulses of Christianity; and so they were overwhelmed with misgivings and grave apprehensions. Doubtless the matter was earnestly discussed from various stand-points by the Jerusalem Church, and in order that they may the better get at the real facts in the case, they determine to send out representatives to inspect the work. For this purpose they select Barnabas, a man of great prudence and conspicuous piety. As these Jewish Christians severely criticised Peter's course in the case of Cornelius, it may be that the design in sending Barnabas was to forbid the receiving of Gentiles into the Church; or, if the preaching at Antioch was subsequent to the conversion of Cornelius, having learned an important lesson from that

event, their object was perhaps the very reverse—viz., to foster and encourage the good work thus begun among the Gentiles. Favoring this view is the fact that they chose for this mission Barnabas, a Grecian, a native of Cyprus, and most probably a personal friend of some of the founders of the Church at Antioch; at any rate, he was far less prejudiced than a native Jew would have been. And if to this we add the other fact that upon his arrival he encouraged the work—which he would hardly have presumed to do on his own responsibility, if instructed otherwise by the apostles and Church at Jerusalem—it becomes pretty certain that the preaching at Antioch was subsequent to the conversion of Cornelius. Yet it is probable that the two events were almost contemporaneous, thus strengthening each other, and emphasizing the great lesson now brought before the Church. Barnabas was a truly pious man, large-hearted and liberal-minded, “full of the Holy Ghost and of faith,” being qualified not only to rejoice over, but to participate in, the revival thus be-

gun among the Gentiles. No sooner had he seen the evidences of the Spirit's presence and power than the last lingering prejudice that he may have entertained was swallowed up in the new joy that filled his heart, and he at once threw his whole soul into the work, exhorting the new converts that with sincerity and constancy they should continue the Christian life, and never one word does he say about their adopting the rites and ceremonies of the Jews in order to become members of the Church. With such earnestness did this man of God preach that the revival was invested with new interest, and in consequence "much people were added unto the Lord," in addition to those received into the Church before his coming. Finding the work thus growing on his hands, and seeing that the fields of Antioch were "white unto the harvest," he begins to look around for some one to share with him the pleasant task of "gathering in the sheaves;" and almost immediately his mind turns to his boyhood friend and school-mate, whom he remembers is even now in the neigh-

boring city of Tarsus. Thither Paul had gone some weeks before for the double purpose of escaping persecution in Jerusalem, and of visiting his old home and former friends. While here he was doubtless busy in seeking the conversion of his kindred and friends, but with what success we have no means of knowing. Remembering that Paul had been divinely designated as the apostle to the Gentiles, Barnabas hurries off in search of him, and soon returns with him to Antioch, for it did not require much persuasion to induce the converted persecutor to engage in revival work. Here the two friends labored together as mutual helps and advisers, and under their united ministry the Church grew rapidly, both in numbers and influence. In this capacity they remained for a full year, giving regular and systematic instructions in the great doctrines of Christianity to those under their charge. In consequence of this great ingathering of Gentiles the Church could no longer be regarded as merely a Jewish sect, as probably had been the case previous to this time; and

so their heathen neighbors invented a new name for them, calling them "Christians," or disciples of Christ—thus, intentionally or otherwise, embodying in the name the very essence of their creed. Antioch was celebrated for the invention of nicknames, and the name was doubtless given in derision. It was not assumed by the Church, as is evident from the fact that it occurs in but two other places in the New Testament (Acts xxvi. 28, 1 Pet. iv. 16), and then manifestly as a term of reproach. Nor did it originate with the Jews, who called the disciples "Nazarenes," and would not for a moment admit that the term "Christ" should be applied to the Master, and so much less would they be willing to apply it to his followers. The form of the name indicates a Latin origin, and so it doubtless originated with the Romans, who applied it in derision to the members of the Church at Antioch because they worshiped the crucified Christ. During the year that Paul and Barnabas acted as co-pastors of the Antioch Church, messengers doubtless frequently came from their brethren

at Jerusalem. Among others, there came a company of "prophets," or religious teachers, and in the number was one named Agabus, who years afterward meets Paul at Cesarea and foretells his apprehension at Jerusalem and imprisonment by the Gentiles. (Acts. xxi. 10, 11.) This man foretells a terrible famine that occurred shortly afterward. Well knowing that such a visitation of providence would bring great suffering to their poor brethren in Judea, and feeling likewise a sense of filial obligation to the mother Church, the Christians at Antioch, in the exercise of a noble generosity, voluntarily undertook to raise a fund to forestall such suffering, and to express their feelings of love and sympathy for their Jewish brethren. The amount of each man's contribution is determined by himself, but they all willingly unite in the effort, "every man according to his ability" giving something—thus furnishing an example in the management of Church finances that is well worthy of general imitation. Having secured the desired amount, the Church select Paul and

Barnabas as their representatives, and commit the money into their care as a sacred trust to be turned over to the deacons of the Jerusalem Church. They may have been sent upon this especial mission, or the money may have been simply intrusted to them as they were going up to attend the meeting of some ecclesiastical court.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

True Christians carry their religion wherever they go.

The gospel is for the Gentile as well as for the Jew.

When the "hand of the Lord" is with his ministering servants, a "great multitude believe and turn unto the Lord."

When tidings of salvation reach the ears of Christians, sympathy is awakened, and, when needed, succor extended.

When the true Christian "sees the grace of God" manifested in the salvation of sinners, he is "glad."

The Christian must not only profess faith, but "cleave unto the Lord with purpose of heart."

Through the influence of "a good man full of the Holy Ghost and of faith," "much people are added unto the Lord."

To guide and instruct Christians is as important as to convert sinners.

The name given to believers in derision has become honorable.

"Every man according to his ability," is the true measure and guide of the Church's liberality.

The prosperous should ever help their needy brethren.

The financial interests of the primitive Church were intrusted to its wisest and best men.

CHAPTER XV.

PERSECUTION RENEWED.

THE history of the Church from the beginning is a strange intermingling of sunshine and shadow. Everywhere the sweet songs of revival are sadly blended with the wails of suffering and sorrow, and ever and anon the historian turns from the bright scenes of prosperity to record the dark deeds of persecution. Only a few short months were the heralds of the gospel allowed to proclaim in peace the glad tidings of salvation, for about the time Paul and Barnabas began their journey to Jerusalem "Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church." This Herod was a grandson of Herod the Great, an Idumean by birth, a Roman by education, and a Jew from policy. How many of the apostles he arrested and how they were treated we know not, except that "he killed James the brother of John

with the sword"—*i. e.*, by decapitation, a mode of punishment regarded as especially disgraceful by the Jews. This James was one of the "sons of Zebedee," and was the first of the apostles to suffer martyrdom, and the only one whose death is recorded in the New Testament; whereas his brother John was the last to die, and the only one, according to tradition, who died a natural death. But although he did not die a martyr's death, he lived a martyr's life. The desire to be popular was Herod's ruling passion, as given by Josephus, and "because he saw it pleased the Jews he proceeded further to take Peter also." Peter's bold, impetuous nature made him conspicuous, and his earnest devotion to his Master's cause rendered him especially obnoxious to the Jews, who were consequently greatly rejoiced at the prospect of his death. The arrest was made about the time for the Passover, but according to Jewish law executions were not allowed during their festivals; and so the prisoner is placed in the custody of a strong Roman guard, who receive rigid orders to keep

him securely. Accordingly, they place him in the inner prison, and, "to make assurance doubly sure," chain him by the arms to a soldier on each side. But while Peter is thus secured by his guards, his fellow-Christians, anxious for the rescue of their friend and leader, are earnestly engaged in prayer for his release, perhaps—or at any rate that he may have grace unfalteringly to seal his testimony with his blood. At first Heaven seems indifferent to their prayers, and no answer is given up to almost the last moment—in order, perhaps, that their earnestness and faith may be thoroughly tested. On the night before the execution the condemned prisoner lies sleeping as peacefully as a little child, although on each side he is chained to a Roman guard and death stands staring him in the face, when suddenly an angel appears in the prison and dispels the darkness with the luster of his presence. Awaking Peter, he commands him to arise, and in doing so his chains fall from his hands of their own accord. Then he is directed to make preparations for leaving the

prison, and to follow his heavenly guide. Obeying, he passes out safely through doors which are opened by some secret power, and soon finds himself alone in the deserted streets of Jerusalem; for as soon as the angel has accomplished his appointed mission, he withdraws. Recovering somewhat from his astonishment, Peter is now convinced that what he had at first taken for a vision is a grand reality; and after considering the best course to pursue, he determines to go at once to the house of a friend at that time residing in Jerusalem. This friend was "Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark." He it was who wrote the second Gospel and accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary tour. His name is here mentioned in connection with his mother to distinguish her from the other Marys of the New Testament. She was the sister of Barnabas (Col. iv. 10), and seems to have shared his spirit of liberality and consecration, and must have been a woman of great faith and courage to have kept her house open as a place of public worship

at such a time, thus rendering herself liable to arrest at any moment. The prayer-meeting on Peter's behalf, it may be, was changed from place to place to avoid detection by their enemies; but it so happens in the providence of God that the apostle now turns his footsteps toward the very house in which the Church is assembled, and knocks for admission at the very moment, perhaps, when prayer is being offered for his release. Well knowing that the next day has been appointed for his execution, his friends determine to spend the entire night in prayer in his behalf; and his release doubtless occurred during "morning watch," just before day. It is not probable that Peter knew that the Church had met at Mary's house, but being on intimate terms with the family, he considered it the best place for him to seek temporary shelter. It was through his instrumentality that Mark, the son of the hostess, was converted (1 Pet. v. 13), and at his dictation perhaps that he afterward wrote the Gospel; so that he was doubtless a frequent visitor at the house. When, therefore, he knocked

at the gate for admission, Rhoda, the portress, instantly recognized his well-known voice; but overcome with joy, she forgot to open the gate, and hurried into the house to publish the welcome tidings that their prayers are answered, and as evidence of it Peter himself stands at the gate. Perhaps they had only asked sustaining grace for Peter, and had never anticipated his rescue, so that the news of his release seemed too good to be true; or, their skepticism may be only another sad illustration of the want of faith on the part of those who profess to trust in God. Here, perhaps, they had been praying for this very thing, and yet when the prayer is answered they are astonished. Such inconsistency on the part of God's people has often blotted the bright pages of the Church's history. At all events, whatever may have been the object of their prayers, they were amazed to hear of Peter's release, and were much more ready to believe that little Rhoda was crazy, or had been frightened by some ghost-like appearance, than that her tidings were true. But her constant affir-

mations that she spoke the truth, emphasized by Peter's continued knockings at the gate, finally induced some of the company to go and open it; and when they did so, they found standing before it none other than the apostle himself. His presence no doubt created quite a confusion, awakening inquiries, suggesting congratulations, and giving rise to expressions of joy and thanksgiving. To suppress the tumult "he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison." Having given them a detailed account of his release, he commands them to report it to the entire Church, and especially to James, who was probably at that time their acknowledged pastor. He was the "son of Alpheus," surnamed "the Less" to distinguish him from "James the son of Zebedee." By some he is regarded as our Lord's brother (Gal. i. 19), and he certainly occupied a very prominent place in the apostolic Church. (Acts xv. 13, xxi. 18, Gal. ii. 9-12.) To escape the rage of Herod, Peter found it necessary to leave Jeru-

saalem and live in retirement; but where we know not, for after this his name fades from the pages of history. Once after this, in the Acts xv. 7-11, and a few times in the Epistles (Gal. ii. 11-14, 1 Pet. v. 13), he is mentioned; but where he labored, and with what measure of success, is reserved for our contemplation at that day when the glorious light of eternity shall flash upon the records of time and reveal the things now hidden from our view. That he was earnest and faithful in his Master's service we may well be assured. When the morning light awakened the busy din of activity in the Jewish metropolis it brought consternation to the hearts of the Roman guards, for well did they know that in accordance with the cruel edicts of the inexorable law of the times their lives must pay the forfeit of their prisoner's escape. They had faithfully discharged their duty, and that Peter could not be found was no fault of theirs; but the bitter disappointment of the Jews must be in some measure appeased, and the bloody Herod issues the mandate for their destruction. Hav-

ing thus added one more crime to his long, dark record of iniquity, he leaves Jerusalem and goes down to his military head-quarters at Cesarea, to preside at the public games in honor of the Emperor Claudius. While here, "arrayed in his royal apparel," and surrounded by a company of pretended friends, who seek to secure his favor by means of their fulsome flatteries, he is suddenly smitten by a visitation of Divine Providence and dies in agony of a most loathsome and painful disease. As if in purposed contrast with this revolting scene, the historian records the increased prosperity of the cause which Herod had vainly sought to destroy; for again persecution served only to scatter the seeds of truth, and in consequence "the word of God grew and multiplied."

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

The Church has had enemies in every age of its history.

A desire for popularity causes men to do many evil things.

God often frustrates the intentions of the wicked.

Earnest prayer on the part of the Church secures blessings.

God delays the answer to prayer to test the sincerity and faith of his people.

A conscience at peace with God enables men to sleep in times of greatest trial.

“The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him.”

True piety recognizes God as the author of every blessing.

The liberated soul instinctively seeks the communion of saints.

True joy is unselfish.

Christians are often astonished at the answer to their prayers.

God often gives much greater blessings than we expect or even desire.

The freed soul delights to tell others how it was set at liberty.

Persecution helps rather than hinders Christianity.

CHAPTER XVI.

BEGINNING OF FOREIGN MISSIONS.

WE now come to another important epoch in the history of the apostolic Church. Hitherto that history has for the most part clustered around Peter, but henceforth Paul becomes the central figure. Hitherto the historian has recorded the growth of the Church among the Jews, but henceforth he confines his attention to its progress among the Gentiles. Hitherto he has recorded the work of "Home Missions;" now he begins the history of "Foreign Missions." The starting-point for the evangelization of the Jews was Jerusalem; for the Gentiles it is Antioch. Paul and Barnabas having accomplished their mission at Jerusalem, about the time of Peter's imprisonment, returned to Antioch, carrying with them as a companion and fellow-laborer, "John, whose surname was Mark." The Church had grown under their united efforts

both in numbers and influence until it became necessary to have numerous subordinate teachers, and among them was one named "Mannaen," a foster-brother of Herod Antipas. How striking the contrast between the two! The one is branded with immortal infamy by the murder of "John the Baptist," while the other is here represented as an earnest preacher of the gospel; and yet they were reared under the very same influences and surroundings. Paul and Barnabas, as faithful co-pastors with these assistants, were earnestly engaged in "ministering to the Lord" and spreading abroad a knowledge of the truth; and as their efforts among the Gentiles were crowned with success, the idea of a universal Church began to dawn upon their minds, while they recalled the command of the Master: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." But just how to obey this command they did not know, and for the purpose of seeking divine guidance as to their duty in reference to the heathen world, they no doubt appointed a special occasion at which they

prayed and "fasted;" this last act never being performed, perhaps, except on special occasions and for special purposes. (Acts x. 30, xiv. 23.) While they were thus engaged in seeking to know the Lord's will, "the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." These men were no longer to be pastors, but were to become missionaries. This was the work to which they had already been called; Paul at his conversion (Acts ix. 15, xxii. 21), and Barnabas by special providence (Acts xi. 23), and now in some supernatural way God again indicates his will that they shall leave the Church that has been established and go on to "the regions beyond." Recognizing the divine call, the apostles prepare to obey it, and the Church to ratify it; and impressed with the solemn importance of the act that will thus set these men apart to this specific work, the congregation again observe a season of fasting and prayer, and then proceed, by laying their hands on the heads of the candidates, to ordain them as foreign missionaries. This scene was

doubtless one of special interest to the Church at the time it occurred, and to-day, as the child of God looks back over the pages of the past, he finds it still invested with peculiar charms as the initial step in the great work of evangelizing the nations. No sooner do Paul and Barnabas learn the will of their King than they prepare to obey it; and severing all the tender ties binding them to home and friends, they set out under the guidance of the Holy Ghost on their first missionary tour, taking with them as a companion and assistant John Mark, who was a nephew of Barnabas. Sailing down the river Orontes, on which Antioch was situated, they came first to the city of Seleucia, near the mouth of the river. But they seem only to have touched at this point and then hurried on to Cyprus, a neighboring island some sixty or seventy miles from the coast. It was one hundred and forty miles long by fifty wide, and was celebrated for its great beauty and fertility. It was the home of Barnabas (Acts iv. 36), and perhaps for that very reason was selected as their first mission-

field. The chief city of the island on the eastern side was called Salamis; and having many Jewish inhabitants, it formed an inviting field for the missionaries. Into the synagogues of their countrymen these earnest servants of God entered and preached the gospel, but apparently without success, for they soon hurried on to Paphos, the chief city at the other end of the island, one hundred miles from Salamis. It was the seat of government, and residence of the proconsul. Here they came in contact with a celebrated magician, one of a class of impostors at that time quite numerous. As to character he was a "false prophet," as to nationality "a Jew," and hence the very basest of impostors, prostituting as he did one of the highest and holiest offices of his nation for his own selfish interests. He was known as Bar-jesus, the Elymas, or "wise man"—for so the Greek term signifies—and had succeeded in ingratiating himself with the governor of the island. Being himself a man of intelligence and reflection, and hearing something of the new

doctrine preached by Paul and Barnabas, his curiosity is excited, and he calls for the preachers that he may learn from their own lips what they believe and teach. Gladly, no doubt, the missionaries obey the summons; but as they undertake to unfold the plan of salvation to the interested governor, the "sorcerer" seeks to counteract the impression made by their words, well knowing that if Paulus is converted to Christianity he can no longer be influenced by his magic arts. Incensed by such conduct, Paul administers to him a severe rebuke, and predicts a sudden judgment of God upon him as a punishment for his sin; and scarcely have the words fallen from the apostle's lips before the guilty man is stricken blind. In his record Luke has given incidentally another interesting proof of his medical knowledge by distinguishing the several steps leading to total blindness; and that the man was thus entirely blind is evident from his conduct in "seeking some one to lead him." This stands out conspicuously as Paul's first miracle, the proof of his apostleship (2 Cor.

xii. 12); and as a constant souvenir of the occasion, his name is changed, like that of Abraham (Gen. xvii. 5), and Jacob (Gen. xxxii. 28), and Peter (John i. 42). Why his Hebrew name should henceforth be dropped and his Roman name substituted, cannot be positively determined, but most probably because this miracle marks his public manifestation as the apostle to the Gentiles; and he here emerges from the subordinate position hitherto held, and ever afterward becomes the leading figure in foreign missions—perhaps in accordance with the revealed but unrecorded will of God. The signal judgment of God which thus suddenly fell upon the impious magician produced a profound impression upon all who witnessed it, resulting in the conversion of the governor, and doubtless also many of his subjects. Having accomplished their mission in Paphos, the missionaries leave the island of Cyprus and go to Perga in Pamphylia, a province of Asia Minor, lying along the southern coast. Of this province Perga, situated on the river Cestrus, was the chief city, and was celebrated

for the worship of Diana. Here an apparently insignificant event occurred, which was destined afterward, however, to separate the two life-long friends, and thus greatly widen the sphere of missionary effort. Afraid of the perils about to be encountered, or else weary of the hardships of missionary life, and desirous of home comforts, "John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem," where his mother resided. (Acts xii. 12.) But whatever his reason for leaving them may have been, it was not satisfactory to Paul (Acts xi. 38), who, on account of his conduct here, refused to take him on a second tour.

"Dwellers in Pamphylia" (Acts ii. 10) had witnessed and received the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Ghost, and hence it is not improbable that the missionaries found churches already established, which it was only necessary to encourage; and so, apparently without any delay in Pamphylia, they pass on to real missionary work, and come to Antioch in Pisidia, so called to distinguish it from its namesake in Syria, both of which

were built by Seleucus Nicator, and named in honor of his father, Antiochus. This Antioch was built on a hill between two plains, one of which was in Pamphylia, and the other in Pisidia, which borders on the north of Pamphylia. It was a long distance and almost due north from Perga. The whole region was wild and mountainous, and the road is to this day, it is said, infested by robbers; so that it is probably to this journey that Paul refers in 2 Cor. xi. 26. Having reached the city, the missionaries, in accordance with their uniform custom, repair to the synagogue, as affording the best opportunity for reaching their deluded countrymen. The synagogue was governed by a bench of "elders." Upon entering the synagogue in Antioch, Paul and Barnabas took seats in the congregation as ordinary worshippers, but there was something in their dress or manner that led the pastor and elders to believe that they were rabbis—or, in the language of our day, ordained ministers—and they sent them an invitation to come forward and address the people. Gladly they availed them-

selves of this opportunity to proclaim the tidings of salvation; and contrary to Jewish custom and the example of Christ (Matt. v. 1, Luke iv. 20), but in accordance with what seems to have been the uniform custom of the apostles (Acts i. 15, xi. 28, xv. 7), Paul immediately stands up, and "beckoning with his hand" to hush the murmur of curiosity that doubtless ran through the audience at the appearance of the strange speaker, he proceeds to preach a sermon which is of peculiar interest to the Church of the present day, because it is the first one of this great apostle that we find recorded. After a suitable introduction, the preacher briefly rehearses the history of Israel from its very beginning as a nation, and after referring to the numerous prophecies in regard to the Messiah, he proceeds to show how they were all fulfilled in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth; so that he and his companion are now sent forth to proclaim the glad tidings of salvation to every one who will accept of it through the merits and mediation of the crucified and risen Redeemer. The apos-

tle's sermon produced a profound impression upon the minds of the people; for when the congregation were dismissed many of them gathered around the preachers, some from idle curiosity to learn further of the new doctrine, and others doubtless from a sincere desire to know more of that religion whose life-giving influence they had already begun to feel. Prominent among these eager listeners were numerous Gentiles, who earnestly besought the missionaries to remain through the week and explain to them the precious privileges of the gospel in which they now learn for the first time that they may share. After exhorting the converts to continue their search after truth and their desire to lead a Christian life, Paul and Barnabas withdraw from the crowd, but soon renew their labors among the people and continue them throughout the week. The presence of the strange preachers and the report of the new doctrine they proclaimed greatly excited the curiosity of the populace, and on "the next Sabbath-day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God."

This doubtless filled the hearts of the apostles with joy, but it also filled the Jews with "envy" and indignation. It was perhaps the first time that they had ever seen the uncircumcised Gentiles crowding into their synagogues; and now learning that these barbarians were to be admitted to the same privileges as themselves, they are filled with anger, and attempt to "contradict the things which were spoken by Paul." They doubtless first tried argument, but finding that they could not meet the stern logic of the apostle, they resorted to "blasphemy" and reproach, reviling the teacher as a heretic, and the Messiah he proclaimed as an impostor. But instead of being deterred by this opposition, "Paul and Barnabas waxed bold;" and finding the Jews hardened against the influences of the gospel, they abruptly state their purpose and commission to preach to the Gentiles. This they do not from any personal pique, or even preference, but from a solemn and sublime sense of duty laid upon them by divine command (Isa. xlii. 6, xlix. 6; Acts ix. 15, xi. 16-18). The declaration that

salvation had been provided for them, and that the fact had been long ago recorded in the Jewish Scriptures, was hailed with delight by the Gentiles, and resulted in the conversion of many of them.

Not content with simply enjoying the gospel themselves, these Gentile converts gladly co-operate with the apostles in making it known to others; and by their combined efforts "the word of the Lord was published throughout all that region," greatly to the disappointment and vexation of the Jews, who, seeing no other way to counteract the influence of the apostles, raise a storm of persecution against them. With this object in view they enlist the sympathies of certain Jewish proselytes of high social standing. They were most probably the wives of the "chief men of the city," and being proselytes, they were especially zealous for their newly adopted faith. Thus the ever-potent influence of woman was turned against the gospel, and through it the city officials, by harsh and perhaps cruel measures, drove away the preachers, who having received such treat-

ment, in obedience to their Master's command (Matt. x. 14) "shook off the dust of their feet against them," and departed for other fields of labor. But notwithstanding the persecution bereft them of their friends and spiritual guides, the converts at Antioch were "filled with joy," because they were also "filled with the Holy Ghost," who constantly applied to them the rich consolations of the gospel.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

From the first Church established among the heathen were sent out the first missionaries to convert the heathen.

Though nurtured in the bosom of the same family, and brought up under the same influences, yet in after-life many a Manaen and many a Herod have been widely separated; the one becoming a preacher, the other a persecutor of the gospel.

The Holy Ghost calls men to a specific work.

The missionary work requires the best men of the Church.

The Holy Ghost no doubt often calls settled pastors to become foreign missionaries.

It is the Church's privilege and duty to ratify a call given by the Holy Ghost.

It is the duty of the Church to send out foreign missionaries.

God's ministering servants are "sent forth" by the authority and under the guidance of the Holy Ghost.

The true minister of the gospel gladly avails himself of the opportunity to "preach the word of God."

Wherever the minister of the gospel goes he finds enemies of the truth.

False teachers seek to counteract the influence of the gospel.

The soul of man is a prize for which the powers of light and darkness earnestly contend.

Sinners will assuredly be punished.

Notwithstanding opposition, the gospel will certainly triumph.

Since the days when the "Israelites sighed for the flesh-pots of Egypt," men have grown weary in the service of God.

The true Christian perseveres in his work in spite of difficulties.

The true Christian observes the Sabbath and attends the sanctuary whether at home or abroad.

The reading of God's word is an all-important part of religious worship.

The true Christian is ever ready to testify for his Master.

It is not enough merely to begin a religious life; men must "continue in the grace of God."

If the injunction, "Let him that heareth say, Come," were more generally obeyed, the Lord's sanctuary would be more largely attended.

Bigots are ever envious of all those who do not pronounce their denominational "shibboleth."

Opposition, instead of deterring, serves rather to develop true Christian courage.

God's purposes must be accomplished.

Those who reject the gospel will be rejected of God.

Many by their conduct "judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life."

God turns away from men only after they have turned away from him.

The true disciple endeavors to obey all God's commands.

The gospel is world-wide in its design and in its life-giving power.

Women have ever exerted a powerful influence both for and against Christianity.

The faithful follower of Christ may expect opposition.

Blind bigots often drive away from themselves life's best blessings.

The presence of the Holy Ghost in the heart is attested by joy and gladness.

CHAPTER XVII.

FIRST MISSIONARY TOUR COMPLETED.

DRIVEN from Antioch by persecution, Paul and Barnabas came to Iconium, some fifty or sixty miles distant, and as usual repaired to the synagogue because it afforded the best opportunity for reaching the people. Here another opportunity was given them to address the audience, and they gladly availed themselves of it. Doubtless the work they had done in Antioch had become known to the people, who were consequently eager to hear the strange preachers. Speaking under the guidance and influence of the Holy Ghost, their logic was resistless, and many believed the gospel. But here again they found two classes — believers and blasphemers — some who received the truth, and others who rejected it. At Antioch the Gentiles had gladly embraced the privileges of the gospel, but here their minds were poisoned by their Jew-

ish neighbors, and they conspired against the apostles. But notwithstanding the opposition, these faithful preachers continued their labors, strengthening the Church by unfolding the truth to them more fully, and doubtless gaining many new converts, while the Lord encouraged his servants by blessing their efforts and granting them miraculous power in attestation of their divine commission. But their growing popularity only intensified the hatred of the Jews, who renewed the persecution with still greater violence; and securing the co-operation of the Gentiles, these alien and otherwise hostile parties unite in a common effort to overthrow Christianity. They determine to put the offending preachers to death, and with this object in view seek a favorable opportunity for carrying out their purpose. But the apostles providentially escape, and fleeing in obedience to their Master's command (Matt. x. 23) they come to Lystra, a city some thirty or forty miles distant from Iconium. Here, and in the surrounding country, they continue to preach the gospel for some time.

During one of their public services there sat in the audience a man who had been a cripple from his birth, and who was therefore regarded by himself and his friends as incurable. Something about the poor cripple's manner attracted the attention of Paul, and perceiving that he had faith in Christ, he commanded him, suddenly and in a loud voice, to stand up; and to the amazement of the audience he not only stood up, but "leaped and walked," thus giving positive proof that he was cured. No sooner did the people recover somewhat from their astonishment than they raised their voices in one clamorous chorus, that "the gods have made their appearance in the likeness of men." Among the ancients these visits were supposed to occur, and Ovid records such a visit to Lycaon, in whose honor this vast country was named, as well as a similar visit to the adjacent province of Phrygia, made by Jupiter and Mercury, the very gods for whom Barnabas and Paul were mistaken. Familiar with these legends, and amazed at the miracle, the conduct of these heathen people is not surprising.

Jupiter was the Roman name for the chief of all the gods, while Mercury was Jupiter's messenger and the god of eloquence. Accordingly, the people mistake Paul, the "chief speaker," for Mercury; and Barnabas, who was probably the elder of the two, for Jupiter; and believing that their gods are really present, the excited heathen hasten to do them homage. After the miracle the apostles most probably withdraw from the crowd and retire to their lodging-place for rest and refreshment, not having understood the confused clamors of the multitude, whose conversation was carried on in the provincial or local dialect. But as soon as they disappear the excited people make hurried preparations to do them honor. Procuring "oxen" for sacrifice and "garlands" for ornaments, they hurry through the city, led by the priest of Jupiter; and having reached the house to which the weary preachers had retired, they attempt to worship them. As soon as Paul and Barnabas comprehend the situation they are horror-stricken, and seek to divert the excited populace from their

purpose by explaining that they are only men like their fellows, but commissioned by the true God to unfold his nature and claims, and so turn the deluded people from the worship of idols to the service of that Being who is the source of every blessing and the fountain of all good. But so imperfectly do these poor heathen understand the words, and so thoroughly are they convinced that nothing less than God could perform such a miracle, that they are with great difficulty restrained from offering their sacrifices. The fickleness of human character is strikingly illustrated in the subsequent conduct of these pagans. The apostles having disclaimed divinity, the people are obliged to seek some other explanation of the miracle; and while they are discussing the matter among themselves, certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium arrive for the purpose of renewing the persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and if possible put a stop to the wonderful success attending their preaching. Not content with driving them from their own cities, they continue to pursue

the preachers from place to place, jealous of the remarkable success that accompanies the preaching of the gospel. Even Christ's power to work miracles has been attributed to "Beelzebub, the prince of the devils" (Matt. xii. 24); and, to account for the miraculous power of the apostles, doubtless some such theory is now advanced by these enemies, who gladly avail themselves of so favorable an opportunity to incite the people against them. Disappointed in their own theory about the divinity of the apostles, it is not strange that this new theory should produce a revulsion of feeling among the excited Lycaonians, or that they so readily join in the plan of persecution suggested by the Jews. What was done to Barnabas the historian fails to state; but the infuriated mob attack Paul with stones, and having killed him, as they suppose, rudely drag him beyond the city limits, where they leave his lifeless body. To this act Paul doubtless refers in 2 Cor. xi. 25. Soon the converts to Christianity gather around the mangled form of their leader, and as they stand in mournful

groups bemoaning their loss or discussing the arrangements for the burial, suddenly, all bruised and bleeding, he staggers to his feet, and with the assistance of friends goes back into the city. Carefully is the news guarded from their enemies, and gently are the wounds dressed by willing hands until the following day, when, in company with Barnabas, the victim of persecution secretly retires to the neighboring town of Derbe, where their stay is perhaps as successful, though not as eventful, as at Lystra; for here they also organize a church and "disciple many," among whom was perhaps Gaius (Acts xx. 4), one of Paul's fellow-laborers. At Lystra another of those who afterward became prominent in the history of the Church was added to the company of the disciples. This was young Timothy (Acts xvi. 1, 2 Tim. iii. 10, 11), who in after years became Paul's most intimate friend and trusted companion. Thus out of the fires of persecution came forth some of the brightest lights that ever gleamed in the spiritual firmament, and from the very first "the

blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church."

Having established the church in Derbe by providing for it necessary officers, and indoctrinating its members in the truths of Christianity, the missionaries begin their journey homeward; and notwithstanding the persecution and danger they might reasonably expect, and the fact that a much shorter route to Antioch—the home Church from which they had been sent out—lay before them through Cilicia, Paul's native country, such is their interest in and concern for their new converts that they willingly turn back and pass over the same ground again, that they may revisit the churches which they had previously established. In this day, when many of our churches are characterized by a wild mania for numbers, and many of our ministers seem intent only upon gathering members into the Church, it may be well to note that in the estimation of Paul, the prince of preachers, as shown by his constant conduct, it is just as important to indoctrinate and edify those who

are already in the Church as it is to gather new members into it. The object of the missionaries upon their return tour was to "confirm the souls of the disciples" by giving them additional instructions in the doctrines and principles of Christianity, and to perfect the organization of the churches by ordaining in each of them the necessary officers. Accordingly, we find that "in every church they ordained elders."

Having visited all the towns where they had previously established churches and provided for the spiritual welfare of their converts, they come to Perga, where from some cause they had failed to preach on their former journey. Here they now preach, and after organizing a church, perhaps, they pass on to Attalia, whence they sail for Antioch to rejoin their friends and recount their missionary experience. This they did doubtless under the guiding influence of the Holy Ghost, having completed the work, as we learn from Luke's record, to which they had been set apart.

After an absence of twelve months, per-

haps, the missionaries again enter Antioch, and gathering the Church together they make a full and doubtless formal report of their labors. And it was probably from this report that Luke gathered the materials for his history. Here they again resume their pastoral work, but how long they remain before they go up to Jerusalem to attend the council in reference to the reception of the Gentiles into the Church, it is difficult and perhaps impossible to determine.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

The manner as well as the matter of preaching is of great importance.

Wherever men go they should attend the sanctuary.

There have always been "unbelieving" persons who have "made the minds of men evil-affected against the brethren" and their cause.

Opposition, instead of deterring, only makes the Christian labor more earnestly.

God has ever borne "testimony unto the word of his grace," and performed wonders through his faithful servants.

The world has ever been divided into two classes, "part holding with the enemies, and part with the friends of Christ."

Parties otherwise alien and hostile have often combined against the servants of Christ.

Christians should not needlessly expose their lives to danger.

Wherever the Christian goes he should preach the gospel.

The gospel has ever been the friend of the helpless and needy.

The true Christian seeks to honor his Master rather than himself.

The wisest and best of men are but men still.

Ministers are commissioned to "preach unto men that they should turn from vanities unto the living God."

God permits much that he does not approve.

God has never left himself without witness in any age or among any people.

From God cometh "every good and perfect gift."

God alone is worthy of worship.

Popular favor is ever fickle. The hands that bear "garlands" now may soon hurl "stones," and the tongues that shout "Hosanna" to-day may cry "Crucify" to-morrow.

"Man is immortal till his work is done."

New converts need encouragement and instruction.

"To continue in the faith" is as important as to embrace it at first.

"We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

Every church should be thoroughly organized under competent officers.

The return of missionaries, and the report of their work, is of great benefit to the Church.

Missionary meetings, where are "rehearsed the things that God has done, and how he has opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles," are exceedingly important.

God works with and through human instrumentalities.

God calls his servants to go sometimes on long, toilsome, and perilous journeys, and sometimes to rest in the bosom of the Church.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONFERENCE AT JERUSALEM.

LUKE'S history of the apostolic Church is naturally divided into two nearly equal parts, the first of which recounts the operations of Divine Providence whereby the Church is forced to the conclusion that the gospel is for the Gentile as well as the Jew, while the second records the acts of the Church in carrying this decision into effect. This conclusion, although rendered unmistakable by the leadings of Providence, nevertheless dawned gradually upon the Church, and was finally reached only after a heated debate in the Gentile Church at Antioch, and an equally animated discussion among the apostles and elders of the mother Church at Jerusalem. That the apostles and their first followers should have been so slow in perceiving the truth and grasping the idea of Christianity in its universality at first glance seems strange; but we

must remember that their natural prejudices and early religious training, together with customs rendered sacred by immemorial usage, and ceremonies clothed with all the authority of statutory law, were arrayed against such a conclusion. The controversy in reference to admitting the Gentiles into the Church revolved around a rite that was by no means insignificant; but on the other hand was the distinctive badge and sacramental seal of the whole Mosaic law. In favor of this rite was the sanctity of age and immemorial observance as well as the example of Christ, who was himself circumcised, and whose avowed purpose was "not to destroy, but to fulfill the law." Nowhere could it be shown that he had repealed the rite, nor had he given authority to his disciples to do so, although he had commissioned them to be the founders of his Church; so that it was but natural that converted Jews should insist upon its observance, both for themselves and their Gentile proselytes. But over against all these arguments was set the unmistakable teachings of Provi-

dence in receiving the Gentiles upon the very same terms and conferring upon them the very same gifts as the Jews; and this argument was so overwhelming that it finally determined the decision of the council called to meet at Jerusalem to consider the question. And so the Church, following in the footsteps of her Master, accorded to the Gentiles equal privileges with the Jews, and inscribed upon her banner, even at that early day, "Christ for the world, and the world for Christ." About the time Paul and Barnabas returned from their missionary tour, the tidings of their success having reached Jerusalem, certain converted Jews, more zealous for the customs of their fathers than for the cause of their Master, having taken exception to what they regarded as intolerable irregularities in receiving Gentiles into the Church without first making them Jews, came to Antioch for the purpose of calling the missionaries to account and correcting the errors they had inculcated. Who these persons were we do not know, but in all probability they were men of no great prominence,

and perhaps less spirituality, for Paul (Gal. ii. 4), in referring to this occasion, characterizes them as "false brethren;" and certainly their teachings were false, and very pernicious as well, for they thus made circumcision essential to salvation. They did not deny the necessity for faith, but their error consisted in making something else besides faith the condition of salvation. The same question, in its essential features, was raised at the Reformation, and again settled in favor of the truth. The same mistake is made to-day by all who substitute an external rite for faith in a personal Saviour, or who seek to add any thing to faith as the one simple and sole condition of salvation; for it is not faith and something else added thereto, but *faith alone*, that procures salvation. Paul and Barnabas, in self-defense and in vindication of their course in establishing Gentile churches, and from a higher motive still—viz., the love of the truth—earnestly resisted the false teaching of these Judaizers, and engaged with them in animated debate; the Greek word indicating that the excitement

among the debaters was very great. In fact, so warm did the discussion become that it was finally agreed to refer the question to the apostles and the mother Church at Jerusalem for settlement. To this Paul agreed; not because he for one moment wavered in his convictions (Gal. ii. 5), but in deference to the wishes of the Church at Antioch, and in obedience to a divine command (Gal. ii. 2). In proof that he felt convinced he was right, he took with him to Jerusalem Titus, an uncircumcised Greek (Gal. ii. 3). The Church at Antioch did not by this act appeal to the authority of the Church at Jerusalem as though it possessed any superior power, but merely sent this delegation to inquire into the representations made by the persons who had come from Judea, and to free their own conduct from misconstruction. That they sympathized with Paul in his views was but natural, and is abundantly evident from their making Titus a member of the delegation, as well as from the courteous and formal manner in which they escorted the delegates on their way. The route lay through

Phenicia and Samaria, along the line of churches already established, to whom Paul and Barnabas rehearsed the success of their missionary labors, and so "they caused great joy unto all the brethren." Having arrived at Jerusalem, the delegates from Antioch received a very cordial welcome from the Church; but before making publicly known the object of their visit, Paul probably called together the apostles and conferred with them (Gal. ii. 2); and in the public meeting which followed he seems to have taken no part except to make a simple statement of the work that had been done through him and Barnabas. How many of the apostles were present upon the occasion we do not know, but at least three (Gal. ii. 9)—Peter, James, and John, and perhaps others—were at this time in Jerusalem, which was still their head-quarters. Just how the council was conducted we do not know, except that James surnamed the Just, and own brother of Christ perhaps, was the presiding officer and announced the decision of the assembly (Acts xv. 19). We know, however, that there were

two other apostles present, representing doubtless other churches in Judea, while Paul and Barnabas, with their associates, were there from Antioch, and "elders" from at least one church. The court having been formally and regularly constituted, Paul proceeds to state the facts in connection with the missionary work done by himself and Barnabas, and to show that the Lord had evidently received the Gentile upon the very same terms as the Jew. But no sooner does he sit down than his position is challenged by the opposing party, who insist upon their favorite idea of ceremonial observance, and the necessity of obedience to the Mosaic ritual. One after another speaks upon the subject doubtless until the discussion becomes so animated that a decision seems almost impossible. To simplify matters the moderator at length appoints a committee, of which Peter seems to have been the chairman. After a careful consideration of the whole subject the committee bring in a report, which is introduced by Peter in a forcible speech, in which he recounts his own experi-

ence in preaching to the Gentiles, and the manner in which God had shown him that he was no respecter of persons. He was the apostle of the circumcision, and at one time strongly opposed to receiving the Gentiles into the Church; so that his words had great weight with the presbytery. In fact, his argument based upon God's providence was absolutely unanswerable; for if God had received the Gentiles without requiring them to submit to the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law, as he evidently had done, certainly the Church had no right to insist upon such obedience. At the close of Peter's speech Paul and Barnabas again recount their labors in the missionary field and the credentials with which God had furnished them, thus proving conclusively that he had granted to the Gentiles the presence and power of the Holy Ghost even as he had done to the Jews, and had shown no difference whatever between them. Doubtless the debate was continued by many speeches on both sides, but Peter's report was at last adopted; and when James rose to an-

nounce the decision of the conference he concluded the discussion with a masterly argument drawn from prophecy, showing that God's providential dealings with the Gentiles had long before been predicted in his word. The decision of the perplexing question having at last been reached, the action of conference is reduced to writing and placed in the hands of a committee, together with letters of sympathy and encouragement addressed to their Gentile brethren, to be conveyed to the Church at Antioch, and to the Gentile churches throughout the world. This committee was composed of "Joses, surnamed Barnabas," and "Silas, chief man among the brethren," distinguished doubtless for both prudence and piety. What became of one of them after his mission to Antioch was discharged we know not, but the other became the chosen and faithful companion of the heroic Paul in his subsequent missionary labors. The action of the conference was in some respects a compromise paper. The representation made by the Judaizers at Antioch was repudiated, and the

men themselves characterized as a self-constituted delegation wholly unauthorized to speak for the Church at Jerusalem. Still some restrictions were placed upon the Gentile converts in order that they might not unnecessarily give offense to their Jewish brethren. They were to refrain from "meat that had been offered to idols," and from the use of "blood," both of which were strongly condemned by the Jewish law (Ps. cvi. 28, Gen. ix. 4, Lev. xvii. 13, 14, Deut. xii. 23, 24). They were also to abstain from "fornication," which by the Jew was considered a grievous sin, but by the Gentile was regarded as in no sense blameworthy. Thus each side was required to make certain concessions for the sake of the other; and this action of the Jerusalem conference, by restoring peace and harmony to the Church, exerted a lasting influence for good. The decision reached was not based upon mere human judgment, but was given under the guidance and by the authority of the Holy Ghost, and was binding upon the Church. Having received the letters and other

writings, the committee appointed by the conference, accompanied by Paul and his companions, set out for Antioch. Here they report the action of the assembly, and bring joy and gladness to the Gentile converts because a schism had been thus happily averted. In addition to the letters of sympathy sent from Jerusalem, Judas and Silas themselves preach the gospel, thus giving much encouragement to their Gentile brethren. How long they continue in this delightful work we know not, but after awhile Judas returns to Jerusalem, while Silas remains in Antioch and becomes Paul's companion in his subsequent missionary labors. This action of the Jerusalem council is worthy of especial attention, because it marks a new epoch in the history of Christianity. Henceforth Jew and Gentile stand upon the same footing.

CHAPTER XIX.

PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY TOUR.

AFTER their return from the council at Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas resumed for awhile their labors as co-pastors of the Church at Antioch. How long they were thus engaged we do not know, but perhaps not a great while; for finding others ready to teach and preach in the home churches, while there were no laborers in the missionary field, the soul of the heroic Paul goes out in tender compassion and earnest consideration for the benighted Gentiles, and turning to Barnabas, who was his companion in boyhood and his fellow-laborer in the former missionary journey, he proposes to him that they make a second tour for the purpose of encouraging and strengthening their Gentile converts. These brethren were in great need of sympathy, for they were exposed on every hand to trials from their heathen neighbors, and they were

also in sad need of instruction, for they had been reared as pagans, and even after their conversion they had been left without a teacher and without so much as a Bible, perhaps, to guide them in the path of duty. Knowing this, Paul was anxious to revisit them, for he was not content to measure his work by the mere number of conversions. In his opinion it was just as important to strengthen his converts in all the Christian graces (Acts xviii. 23, 1 Thess. iii. 5, 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3) and build them up in a holy life. He thus furnishes an example that is at least worthy of consideration at the present day, when a man's work is so apt to be estimated by the number of names he adds to the Church record. Barnabas willingly consents to Paul's proposition, being equally anxious to revisit the scenes of their former labors, and eager doubtless not only to learn the spiritual condition of each church, but to hear the personal experience of each individual convert. But while readily agreeing as to the general purpose of their journey, they fail to agree as to the details. Barnabas

desired to take with them "John, whose surname was Mark," his sister's son (Acts xv. 37), influenced thereto no doubt by reason of this near relationship, as well as by his natural kindness of heart, which led him upon a former occasion to espouse the cause of Paul himself when he was rejected by the Church (Acts ix. 27); and his confidence in the better character of his nephew was not misplaced, as Paul was afterward very willing to acknowledge (Col. iv. 10, 11, 2 Tim. iv. 11). Mark had deserted the missionaries on their former tour at Pamphylia (Acts xiii. 13), either through homesickness or an unwillingness to endure the toil and encounter the danger to which they were exposed, or from some other cause which was not considered satisfactory by Paul, and he was not willing to take him a second time. On account of this difference of opinion the two apostles, so long and so pleasantly associated, became alienated in their feelings and separated in their work, for "the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder one from the other." No

doubt both were at fault; Paul being too harsh in his judgment of Mark, and Barnabas too lenient. But it is hardly possible that the two friends parted in anger and hatred, for Paul's subsequent reference to Barnabas (1 Cor. ix. 6) shows that the alienation was not permanent; yet their quarrel deprived them of the pleasure of visiting together the scenes of their former labors, and presented a humiliating spectacle for the consideration of the Church and the criticism of the world. It is worthy of note that all Paul's recorded controversies with his brethren—viz.: with the Judaizing teachers from Jerusalem (Acts xv. 2), with Peter (Gal. ii. 11), and with Barnabas—occurred about this time, and may be accounted for perhaps in part by the delicate condition of his health (Gal. iv. 13). But however wrong the quarrel between the apostles may have been, God overruled it for good, and thereby secured two missionary enterprises instead of one. "Barnabas took Mark and sailed unto Cyprus," his native country, in connection with which we thus have the first

(Acts iv. 36) and last mention of his name; for after this incident there is no further mention of him. But it is hardly possible that such a man could remain inactive, and as Christianity afterward became established on the island of Cyprus, it is well-nigh certain that his time was spent in preaching the gospel to his countrymen. While Barnabas and Mark thus sail for Cyprus, Paul selects as a companion Silas, one of the two delegates sent by the Jerusalem council to the Church at Antioch, and with him departs on his second missionary journey. While Barnabas takes their former route, with a view perhaps to visiting the churches in the order in which they were established, Paul journeys to the extreme eastern limit, and visits them in an opposite direction. "He went through Syria and Cilicia," of which Antioch and Tarsus were the capitals, and thus he also doubtless revisits his native city, and likewise, perhaps to him, the more memorable city of Damascus. But wherever he went his work was to "confirm the churches" in faith and a holy life by explaining to

them more fully the plan of salvation and indoctrinating them more thoroughly in the grand truths of the gospel. Thus they were "established in the faith and increased in number daily."

The revival began, as it always does, in the hearts of God's people, and when they were edified and revived sinners were converted and added to the fellowship of the saints. Paul doubtless experienced great pleasure in again meeting those in whose salvation he had been instrumental; but there was one in whom he felt a special interest. In the Church at Lystra was a young man whose zeal and consecration gave promise of great usefulness. His name was Timothy, and he was doubtless one of the apostle's converts during his former visit to that place. Finding his past life characterized by consistency and consecration, Paul is anxious to have him as a co-laborer in the missionary work, and from this time forward he becomes the intimate friend and almost constant companion of the great apostle. How long the missionaries tarried among the

churches already established we do not know, but having familiarized themselves with their spiritual condition and imparted needed instruction, they left them for the purpose of preaching the gospel where it had never been heard.

Having passed through that portion of Asia Minor adjacent to Phrygia and Galatia, they attempt to preach in the Roman province of Asia, bordering on the Ægean Sea, but some interposition of Providence or direct communication of the Spirit caused them to change their course, and they passed on with the intention of entering Bithynia, another province in the extreme north of Asia Minor. Here they were a second time arrested in their self-selected course by some providential interference, and they again changed their route and went down to Troas, an important sea-port a few miles distant from the site of ancient Troy. Hitherto the Spirit had shown the missionaries where they must not preach; now they receive the third supernatural revelation directing them where they must preach, for in

the silent watches of the night there appeared to Paul in a vision a heavenly messenger in the garb of the Macedonians, and perhaps speaking their dialect, beseeching him to come and preach the gospel in Europe. Macedonia was one of the most important kingdoms of ancient Greece, and the birthplace of Alexander the Great. But favored as Greece was in philosophy, art, and commerce, she still needed the help of the gospel just as all heathen countries do to-day, however highly favored they may be in other respects. This vision cleared away all doubt from the mind of Paul in reference to the path of duty, and he prepared at once to obey the divine command thus given. For the first time in the pages of his history Luke here speaks as an eye-witness, and uses the first person "we," from which it has been reasonably conjectured that he joined the missionaries at Troas, in the capacity of a physician (Col. iv. 14), for the purpose of watching over Paul, whose health at this time was very delicate (Gal. iv. 13-15). Taking with him the little missionary band, which now numbered

three besides himself—viz.: Silas, Luke, and Timothy—Paul prepares to leave Asia; and it is worthy of note that this hero of the gospel thus sets sail upon his Heaven-appointed mission from the same port from which embarked the heroes of both the “Odyssey” and the “Æneid.”

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

People must not only be converted, they must also be indoctrinated and trained in God's service.

While the home field has comparatively many laborers—in the United States one minister for every six hundred persons—the foreign field has but few indeed, only one minister to every half-million of people.

The faithful preacher makes the spiritual condition of his flock the subject of much earnest thought and prayer.

The best of men are not without fault—even the apostles quarreled among themselves.

Faithful service in a small field prepares for usefulness in a larger one.

In matters of indifference the Christian may

yield to the whims of others, but never in matters essential to salvation.

Churches "established in the faith" will increase in numbers.

God often hedges up our pathway because he has a better one awaiting us.

The Macedonian cry, "Come over and help us," is to-day echoed from every quarter of the heathen world in the dying-groans of nearly one thousand millions of our race.

CHAPTER XX.

THE GOSPEL IN EUROPE.

AFTER a prosperous voyage of two days, the missionaries land at Neapolis, a seaport on the Macedonian coast some ten miles from Philippi; but from some cause they remain here but a very short time, and hurry on to the latter city, which was founded by and named in honor of Philip, the father of Alexander the Great. It is memorable in profane history as the scene of a great battle between rival factions of Romans, and rendered still more memorable in sacred history as the scene of the first battle upon European soil between Christianity and Paganism. At the time of Paul's visit it was one of the principal cities of Macedonia and a Roman "colony"—a fact noted by Luke doubtless because of what afterward occurred to the missionaries at this place. A "colony" was Rome in miniature. The names of its citizens were still enrolled in

one of the Roman tribes, the Roman laws and customs were scrupulously observed and were administered by magistrates, or pretors, the Latin language was spoken, and even the coins bore Latin inscriptions. Such was the character of the community into which Paul and his companions now enter. Being a military rather than a commercial city, there were perhaps very few Jews in it and no synagogue. But there were a few devout souls among these Jews, who loved to engage in the worship of the God of their fathers, and they found a suitable place in one of nature's temples amidst the quiet seclusions of an inviting grove just outside the city gates, near by the sparkling waters of a majestic river. To this sacred spot they often resorted for prayer and praise; and on the Sabbath after the arrival of the missionaries at Philippi they go as usual to engage in religious worship, accompanied by Paul and his companions, with whom they have become acquainted during the preceding days; for it is but natural to suppose that in the midst of strangers these pioneer preachers

would seek the society of those in whose lives they found some affinity. Apparently the little band of worshipers is composed chiefly, if not entirely, of women; and so all the grand results achieved by the gospel throughout Europe and America may be traced back along the line of rolling centuries to that woman's prayer-meeting held on the banks of the Gangites nearly two thousand years ago, for the gospel was not introduced into Europe by means of splendid and imposing services in some magnificent synagogue or grand cathedral, where eager multitudes hung entranced upon the eloquent words of the preacher, but rather through the influence of a simple sermon addressed to an audience of perhaps less than a dozen women seated upon the ground under the grateful shade of the trees. It is not probable that Paul preached even a formal sermon, but with his companions "sat down," and in an informal way unfolded the plan of salvation to the "women who resorted thither." Among the number was one called Lydia, a Jewish proselyte, most probably

from the "city of Thyatira," in the province of Asia; and it is remarkable that Paul's first convert on European soil was from the very country where he had been forbidden to preach by the interpositions of Providence. By occupation this woman was a "seller of purple," either of the dye-stuff or of the fabrics already dyed. These purple robes were highly prized by the ancients (Jer. x. 9, Ezra xxvii. 7, Luke xvi. 19, Rev. xvii. 4, xviii. 16), and the art of dyeing them is expressly mentioned in the classics as practiced by the Lydian women (Homer, Book IV., 141). Purple in olden times was quite costly; so that Lydia's occupation would require the investment of considerable capital, and hence it is natural to conclude that she was possessed of some wealth. She had been proselyted to the Jewish faith, and was already a devout worshiper of the true God. Longing no doubt for more light, she listened eagerly and intently to what the missionaries said with a heart prepared by divine power for the reception of the truth, and Paul's words, in the hands of the Holy

Spirit, effected her conversion. This she gladly attested by a public profession of her faith, and was at once formally admitted into the Christian Church through the initiatory rite of baptism. But not only was she herself baptized; her entire "household," including children doubtless who were too small to exercise a personal faith, likewise received the ordinance, and must therefore have been baptized upon the faith of their mother. Having thus identified herself with the visible Church of Christ, she seeks to show her gratitude to his servants by urging them to become her guests. She thus proves her faith by her works, for although these men were proclaiming doctrines that were likely to arouse the opposition of her customers, and so injure her temporal prosperity, she extends her offers of hospitality and presses them with such earnestness that Paul for once deviates from his usual custom of receiving aid from his converts (Acts xx. 33, 34). Lydia's hospitality was so sincere and her means so abundant that he could not consistently decline the invitation.

But after all, perhaps, he accepted it for her sake, that he might make her more thoroughly acquainted with the glorious truths of the gospel. The missionaries no doubt remained in Philippi for some time, and for several Sabbaths continued to meet with and instruct Lydia and her companions at their place of worship by the river-side. On one of these occasions they were followed by a poor demoniac, who was regarded by the Philippians as a prophetess. By her pretended prophecies and mad ravings she exerted a great influence over the minds of the superstitious, and became a source of revenue to her owners. Such diviners were protected by the government, and were consulted by the leading men of the nation. They were often slaves, as in this case. This poor woman, through the influence of the demon (Matt. viii. 29, Mark iii. 11, Luke iv. 41, viii. 28), recognized the power of God in the apostles, and following them from place to place proclaimed their true character to the curious crowds that gathered to see and hear the strange preachers. This

she continued to do for several days, until Paul, overcome by sorrow for the unfortunate woman or indignation at the evil spirit, turned and commanded it in the name of Christ to come out of her; and at once it obeyed, in fulfillment of the promise long before made to the disciples (Mark xvi. 17, Luke ix. 1).

Why Paul waited so long before rebuking the evil spirit can only be conjectured, but most probably it was prudence which caused him to hesitate in provoking a controversy with Paganism, by thus making a direct attack upon one of its most cherished superstitions. Having been rescued from the power of the demon and restored to her right mind, the woman ceased her pretended prophecies, and so ceased to bring money to her owners, who seeing the revenues thus cut off, and caring nothing for the salvation of a human soul so long as it interfered with their business prosperity, instigated a persecution against the missionaries. Covetousness was thus the cause of this first heathen persecution of Christians, as it was of many subsequent persecutions.

Luke and Timothy being Greeks were perhaps unmolested, but Paul and Silas were arrested by the angry mob and violently hurried into the "market-place," where the "magistrates" held their court. Before this tribunal they were arraigned on a false charge, and the case prejudiced by an appeal to the national antipathy against the Jews. These people were looked upon with peculiar contempt by the Romans, and the accusers artfully seek to excite this prejudice against the prisoners, whom they charge with the grave crime of attempting to change Roman custom and subvert Roman law. These laws forbade innovations in religion as calculated to unsettle the minds of the people and create political disturbances, and the accusers thus cover up their private grievance under the cloak of public injury, and further strengthen their plea by bringing the proud Romans into sharp and significant contrast with the hated Jews. Such an appeal soon inflamed the minds of the excited crowd, and instead of seeking to quell the uproar the court encouraged it. It was their duty to pro-

tect the prisoners and to give them the opportunity of defending themselves, but without waiting to go through the formality of a trial or to pass sentence of condemnation, they act in concert with the enraged mob and command them to be beaten. The Greek word in the original history indicates that the beating was done with "rods," the usual method of Roman scourging; and Paul says that he was thus punished three times (2 Cor. xi. 25), but history is silent as to where the other two scourgings occurred. The Jewish law restricted the strokes to "forty save one" (Deut. xxv. 3), but the Roman law had no such merciful provision, and in this case the beating doubtless continued until the maddened mob grew weary of their cruel sport; and as the prisoners were beaten upon the bare back, their clothes having been "rent off of them" by the magistrates, they must have suffered intensely. Not content with this cruelty, they afterward cast them into prison and charge the jailer to take extra precautions in order to prevent the possibility of escape. In olden times the jailer

was also the executioner of condemned criminals, and so became brutalized by his vocation; and the jailer at Philippi was no exception to the general rule, for notwithstanding the bruised and bleeding condition of his prisoners he hurried them away into the "inner prison," a damp, cold cell from which both the light and air were excluded, filled with filth and reeking with vermin. But to this second act of cruelty he adds still another, for he makes "their feet fast in the stocks," an instrument used to confine and torture the worst criminals. This was a heavy piece of timber with holes in it, into which the feet were thrust in such a way as to be stretched widely apart, and make escape impossible. Such was the jailer's object; for he well knew that if his prisoners escaped his life must pay the penalty, according to Roman law. Placed under these unfavorable circumstances—with their backs still smarting from the cruel scourging, without food, stifled by the close, poisonous atmosphere, with feet cramped in the stocks, and all for the performance of a good deed,

without being convicted of any crime, and without even the form of a trial—if ever men were justifiable in groaning and complaining, certainly Paul and Silas were. But as we listen for their moans and indignant exclamations we catch instead the echoes of a gladsome song, wafted on the stillness of the midnight air. It was a strange place for a prayer-meeting, and especially for hymns of praise; and yet thus were these prisoners employed, while all around them were lost in sleep. But as the first strange notes of that midnight song fell from their lips, one after another of the prisoners awoke from their slumbers and listened with startled attention. They were astonished that men could sing under such circumstances, and were curious to hear the strange truths enunciated in their songs and prayers. Had they heard oaths and bitter blasphemies, they would have paid no attention to what was doubtless an every-day occurrence; but songs of praise issuing from the dungeon's gloomy depths had never been heard before. In the original history the Greek verbs are in the

imperfect tense, denoting that the praying and singing continued for some time, during which their fellow-prisoners were attentively listening to Paul and Silas. While they are thus engaged suddenly the earth begins to tremble, shaking the huge iron staples loose from the prison-walls and throwing the prison-doors wide open. Doubtless all these circumstances combined to make a deep impression upon the minds of the astonished prisoners, who would naturally ascribe this strange phenomenon to the God whose name reached their ears for the first time in these midnight songs, and whose presence and power they had heard invoked in the prayers of his servants whom he enabled to rejoice under such unfavorable surroundings; and perchance some of these convicts were numbered among those who were received into the Church on that memorable night. The jailer having taken extra precautions with his prisoners, under the impression that all is secure, lies down to sleep; but soon the song of the imprisoned preachers and the shock of the earthquake startle him from his

slumbers. Half dazed with astonishment and fear, he looks around him, and to his horror sees the prison-doors wide open. Naturally enough, he concludes that the prisoners are gone; and knowing full well that his life must pay the penalty if such is the case, he prefers suicide to the disgrace of a public execution. But just as he makes ready for the fatal deed Paul looks out from the darkness of his cell and catches sight of the jailer standing with a light in one hand and his sword in the other. Or, he may have become aware of his purpose by hearing some frantic ejaculation, or in some supernatural way. At any rate, seeing him in the act of taking his life, the grand old missionary forgets his own sufferings in his eager interest to save the life of another, and calls out to him that the prisoners are all still in their places—a most remarkable fact, when we consider that their fetters had fallen off and the prison-doors were standing open! Some of these men were doubtless already condemned to death, and all of them looked forward to the tortures of prison-life more or less protracted;

but awed by the remarkable events they had just witnessed, or influenced it may be by the Spirit of that God of whom they had just heard for the first time, they were willing to imperil their natural lives for the sake of learning the way of life eternal. The midnight song under circumstances so forbidding, the earthquake, the interest of a prisoner in the welfare of his keeper, so new and unexpected, the presence of all the prisoners without an effort to escape, were so strange that the jailer was overwhelmed with astonishment and fear. Ascribing it all to the influence of Paul and Silas, whom he knew to be teachers of a new religion, he justly regarded them as more than ordinary men. He had doubtless heard of the miraculous cure of the demoniac girl, and it is not improbable that he had heard something of the gospel from the lips of the imprisoned preachers during their stay in Philippi, and believed them to be possessed of the great secret of salvation, which he was now anxious to learn. These remarkable events proved the last argument perhaps to convince his already

inquiring mind; and calling for lights sufficient to illuminate the dark prison-cells he hurries into the presence of the missionaries, and after imploring their forgiveness for his previous cruelty to them, he brings them out of the cold, comfortless "inner prison" into the outer court, and anxiously asks that all-important question, "What must I do to be saved?" which instinctively trembles upon the tongue of every awakened sinner, and which has echoed throughout the earth as the theme of so many impassioned sermons for nearly two thousand years. Taking this as a text, the preachers, forgetful of their own sufferings, gladly unfold the plan of salvation to the anxious jailer and his family, who, together with the prisoners, doubtless gather around and listen with eager curiosity to the words of life that thus fall upon their ears for the first time. As the precious truths of the gospel found a lodgment in these hardened hearts, it produced, as it always does, a wonderful change, and the formerly cruel jailer is transformed into a messenger of mercy. With a

soul brimful of gratitude and joy, he seeks how to alleviate the sufferings of his new-found friends. Accordingly, he brings water and carefully washes their wounds, and then with water from the same fountain he is in turn baptized by the missionaries and at once received into the visible Church. In addition to himself, his entire household received the ordinance. This included doubtless some of the prisoners and all of his children, a part of whom were presumably infants. Having thus confessed Christ and been received into the fellowship of his Church, the jailer turns his attention to the comfort of those whom he now regards as his guests. At the hazard of his office, and perhaps of his life, he removes them from the cold, forbidding prison, and bringing them into his own house, sets food before them, of which they were sadly in need. Thus attesting his faith in an act of practical piety, in which he literally "feeds the hungry" and "cares for the prisoners," he spends the remainder of the night with his fellow-Christians in acts of devotion and songs of praise.

It was a strange hour and a strange place for a revival, as well as a strange class of persons from which to gather converts. Ordinarily brutal jailers and condemned criminals are not the people to swell the ranks of the Church; but from this class several accessions were now made to the Philippian congregation, which hitherto had consisted of Lydia's family and her friends. But this church, thus born amidst these remarkable surroundings, was sacredly embalmed in the memory of Paul; and while he regarded it with especial affection (Phil. i. 3-5), it reciprocated his feelings, and was at one time the only church which he founded from which he received contributions for his support (Phil. iv. 10-15). It is worthy of note that his letter to this church, whose very name must have been to him the synonym of physical suffering and a constant reminder of his own guilt in persecuting the servants of God, is the most joyous of all his Epistles.

At last morning broke on that eventful night, and the "magistrates," alarmed by the earth-

quake, or convinced upon further reflection that they had treated the prisoners with undue harshness, send messengers to the jail to have them released. Overjoyed at the prospect of seeing his new-found friends set at liberty, the jailer hurries to them with the welcome tidings; but to his astonishment the prisoners demur, and send a message to the magistrates that is well calculated to fill them with the gravest apprehensions. For the first time Paul reveals the important fact that he and his companion are Roman citizens, and that the magistrates by their hasty and harsh conduct have rendered themselves liable to lose their positions, and perhaps their lives, by thus violating the stern laws of Rome. Learning this, they are justly filled with alarm; and, hurrying to the prison, they penitently beg pardon of their prisoners and earnestly request them to leave the city. Actuated by no feelings of revenge, the preachers are ready to grant this request after they have made suitable provision for the welfare of the church, but will not compromise Christianity by fleeing as fugi-

tives. This whole narrative sets forth most strikingly Paul's clear judgment and remarkable presence of mind, as well as his firm, unshaken faith in the promises of God. Sent by divine direction to preach the gospel in Europe, he might naturally have felt discouraged and dismayed when he found his labors suddenly arrested and himself and companion helpless prisoners in a dreary dungeon; but faith enabled him to soar to that high pinnacle of Christian confidence where he could look out undismayed over the wreck of man's fondest hopes and exclaim, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God!" He might have escaped from his perilous position under the cover of darkness and by the help of the earthquake, but to do so would compromise his standing as the representative of Christianity and cripple the future efforts of the church at Philippi. To flee thus as a fugitive would leave the jailer to commit suicide, and the prisoners to perish in their sins; and even to depart privately from the prison, as suggested by the magistrates,

would be to lose the high vantage-ground that might be gained for the Church if they were publicly acquitted of the alleged offense, and as Roman citizens placed under the protection of the law. Having thus secured for their cause the sympathy and respect of the people, Paul and Silas, after speaking words of instruction and encouragement to their new converts, place the infant church under the care of Luke and Timothy and take their departure for other fields of labor.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

Women have ever been among the most earnest and useful members of the Christian Church.

The gospel should be preached by the "river-side," as well as in the pulpit.

The great church at Philippi grew out of a little prayer-meeting held by a few godly women.

The devout soul does not allow business to prevent worship.

By living up to the light she had, Lydia received still more.

When the Lord opens the heart, it will "attend to the things spoken" by his servants.

Faith in Christ should be attested by a public profession of Christ.

The Christian religion is a family religion.

"The children of believing parents are to be baptized."

Hospitality is a Christian virtue and duty.

The devil hates the prayer-meeting.

The devil is subject to the power and authority of Christ.

Good men are grieved by what Satan does.

Wicked men oppose the gospel because it interferes with their dishonest gains.

Fidelity to the truth brings trials and persecutions.

The Christian religion commends itself to man by inspiring songs of joy amidst the darkest scenes of life.

What men are is of far greater importance than where they are.

God not only executes but he controls the laws of nature.

God can deliver his people from all their enemies.

“Do thyself no harm,” is the message of the gospel to every self-destroying sinner.

Guilt is the parent of fear.

“What must I do to be saved?” is the most important question of life.

Salvation is obtained not by doing, but by believing.

Faith in Christ is the simple and sole condition of salvation.

Faith is not a work, but a rest upon the finished work of another.

The house reflects the character of its head.

No one is saved or lost alone.

Conversion manifests itself in a change of conduct.

CHAPTER XXI.

PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL IN EUROPE.

HOW long Luke and Timothy remained at Philippi we do not know, but we find the latter in company with Paul and Silas at Berea a few weeks later (Acts xvii. 14); and it may be that he accompanied them from Philippi, leaving only the former in charge of that church. No mention is made of Luke again until Paul's third missionary tour and second visit to Macedonia, when we find him once more in company with the great missionary on the voyage from Philippi to Troas (Acts xx. 5, 6), where he resumes the use of the first person "we," which he had dropped as Paul and his companions left Philippi, and continues it to the very end of his history. He writes as an eye-witness of what occurred at Philippi, but in a more general way of the remainder of the missionary tour. It has been conjectured that he was employed as a physi-

cian and surgeon on one of the large ships that sailed between Philippi and Troas, and while not in immediate charge of the Philippian church he would thus have frequent opportunities for visiting it.

Commending the new converts to the grace of God and the care of the "beloved physician," Paul and Silas turn away from those scenes in which there was such a strange intermingling of sunshine and shadow, of joy and sorrow, and pursue their journey along the old Roman road in search of other fields of labor. At the end of the first day's journey they come to Amphipolis, a town of great military importance in the days of Thucydides, some thirty miles distant; but from some cause they only tarry overnight, and the next morning push their way onward to Apollonia, thirty miles farther on, which they reach toward the close of the second day. Here they remain all night, and again hurry on to Thessalonica, distant about thirty-five miles, which they reach at the end of the third day. It was therefore distant from Philippi

about one hundred miles. It was a very old town, called Therma by Herodotus and Thucydides, and was the resting-place of Xerxes on his memorable march. It was rebuilt by Cassander and named in honor of his wife, who was a sister of Alexander the Great. It is now called Salonica, and is the second city of importance in European Turkey. Here the missionaries halt and begin to preach the gospel; and one reason for their doing so seems to have been because they here find "a synagogue of the Jews;" for wherever he goes Paul makes the first offer of salvation to his countrymen. For three successive Sabbaths he meets with them in their synagogue, and from their own Scriptures clearly proves that the rejected and crucified Nazarene was none other than their long-promised Messiah. The whole Jewish congregation were deeply interested in the discussion, for his familiarity with the Scriptures enabled him to take up the Messianic prophecies one after another, and show how they were all fulfilled in the life and death of Christ; and in consequence of

this comparison of the prophecy and its fulfillment, many of them believed and were received into the fellowship of the Christian Church. But then, as now, the preaching of the gospel produced two widely differing effects; for while some thus believed and sought to build up the Church, others were enraged by the apostles' success and sought to destroy it. Thus, ere the marks of Paul's severe sufferings at Philippi were effaced (1 Thess. ii. 2), another persecution was raised against him, the cause of which seems to have been the reception of Gentiles into the Church in the same way and upon the same terms as the Jews. This gave offense to the unbelieving Jews, and calling to their assistance the worthless loafers around the markets and street corners, they assault the house where they suppose the preachers are lodging; but in the providence of God the mob fails to find them. Still further enraged by this disappointment, they rudely seize the proprietor of the house and other Christian inmates, and drag them before the town authorities upon the charge of

treason against the government. This man, whom the mob thus substituted for the missionaries themselves, was perhaps a relative of Paul (Rom. xvi. 21), and was arraigned before the court upon the charge of aiding and encouraging men who were seeking to draw the people away from their allegiance to the Roman emperor and attach them to another king. This may have been a mere calumny, devised in the hope of securing the arrest of the missionaries; or, it may have been a real misapprehension of Paul's doctrine of the kingly character of Christ, which he held forth very prominently in this city (1 Thess. ii. 12, 2 Thess. i. 5). But at any rate their accusation against Paul and Silas, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also," is grand testimony from the enemies of the gospel to its revolutionary character, and speaks much for the spread of Christianity—showing that a report of the apostles' labors had preceded them to Thessalonica. The appearance of the mob in the streets, and their startling statement that such a party as they

described existed in the city, caused great alarm, both among the people and the "rulers." The presence of such a party would convict the town officials of negligence, and perhaps cost them their office, and might result in the Romans changing their capital to another city; for at this time the Jews were regarded with especial dislike, and as yet Jews and Christians were classed together. The prisoners were therefore doubtless examined very closely; but nothing being found that was likely to endanger the Roman government, they were set at liberty after they had given a pledge that the missionaries should be sent away. The Greek word translated "rulers" in the original history is a peculiar one, found nowhere else in the New Testament nor in any classical writer, and it thus bears striking testimony to the accuracy of Luke's record, for Thessalonica was a "free city"—*i. e.*, self-governed in all its internal affairs, and presided over by a board of supreme magistrates to whom was given this peculiar title, as proved from an inscription on the ruins of an archway in mod-

ern Salonica, which not only shows that the magistrates of ancient Thessalonica were called "Paletarchs," but that they were seven in number. The sacred historian narrates with striking exactness the political features of the various cities and countries through which the missionaries pass—*e. g.*, he gives Cyprus as a "proconsular province," Philippi as a "colony," and Thessalonica as a "free city;" all of which statements the pages of profane history abundantly verify.

How long Paul and Silas remained in Thessalonica we do not know, but most probably for several weeks; and their labors were crowned with rich success, for here they founded what afterward became a large and flourishing church. It was the second church established in Europe, and was composed of a few Jews, a large number of Greeks, and many of the most prominent women of the city. From the letters afterward addressed to this church we learn that Paul, in order to disarm the prejudices of his hearers, resolved to make his own living rather than accept the hospitality

to which he was justly entitled (Matt. x. 10, Luke x. 7, 1 Tim. v. 18); and we find him, after the busy labors of the day in preaching to the people, working until a late hour of the night at the trade of "tent-making," which he had learned in his boyhood (1 Thess. ii. 9, 2 Thess. iii. 8). In this way he was able to provide for himself food and lodging. But while he is thus engaged in the Master's service he is not forgotten by his Philippian friends. Knowing perhaps his reasons for laboring with his own hands, they send him more than one contribution (Phil. iv. 16) to supplement his earnings. That liberality which began with Lydia in the very beginning of the Church continued to characterize it through many years of the future, and the gratitude of the jailer doubtless prompted in him and others a disposition to imitate the example of Lydia, so that the church stands conspicuous among its neighbors, characterized by an honorable singularity (Phil. iv. 15). In consequence of the disturbance raised by the mob, Paul and Silas could not again ap-

pear in public without endangering their own lives and compromising their fellow-Christians; so, reluctantly bidding their friends farewell, they depart under the cover of darkness, and when the sun again dawns upon the earth are far on their way in search of another field of labor. This they soon find at Berea, a town some fifty miles from Thessalonica, which they doubtless reach after a hard day's journey. Here they find another synagogue, and entering it, at once begin their accustomed work of preaching the gospel. Soon an intense interest is developed in the minds of these Jews, who are less prejudiced and less bigoted than those of Thessalonica. As Paul explains how the Messianic prophecies are fulfilled in the life and death of the Nazarene, they listen with eager interest; but not content to take the statement of a stranger, they retire thoughtfully to their homes and carefully examine the Scriptures for themselves, in consequence of which many of them are convinced that Christ is indeed the Messiah, and are received into the fellowship of the Christian

Church. Besides the Jews, many Gentiles were also admitted to membership; but notwithstanding this church has an origin so honorable, it is a remarkable fact that Paul never refers to it in any of his letters. The tidings of Paul's success in Berea were soon carried back to Thessalonica, and at once aroused the Jews of that city to fresh persecution. Following the example once set them by the great missionary himself, of which he was doubtless reminded, they leave their homes and their business for the purpose of persecuting the Church of Christ, and coming to Berea they soon inflame the minds of the people and force the apostle to flee again for his life.

Aided by his brethren, he departs secretly from the city, and at some point on the neighboring coast embarks for Athens. So hurriedly is he obliged to leave Berea that the work is only partially done, and he leaves Silas and Timothy, who were in less danger than himself, to complete the organization of the church. If Timothy was indeed left at Phi-

lippi with Luke, he doubtless carried one of the contributions of that church to Paul while he labored at Thessalonica, and possibly remained there for awhile after the others had been sent away. As a Greek he was less exposed to danger than Paul and Silas, and he seems to remain at each station to perfect the work which his companions are obliged to leave unfinished. At all events, we find him again in company with the missionaries at Berea, and he and Silas remain there for awhile after Paul's departure.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

Christ "must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead."

"Reasoning out of the Scriptures," it is easy to prove that "Jesus is the Christ."

A careful comparison of the life of Jesus of Nazareth with the prophecies concerning the Messiah is pretty sure to awaken belief in the unprejudiced mind.

Those who truly believe in Jesus will gladly "consort" with his disciples.

The preaching of the gospel has always been

attended by widely differing effects—some believe, others will not.

Those who believe not often persecute those who do.

The gospel revolutionizes the heart and the world.

The character and conduct of Christians have often been calumniated.

Besides the monarchs of earth “there is another King, Jesus,” to whom “every knee shall bow and every tongue confess.”

To “receive the word of God with readiness of mind” indicates nobility of character.

Proclamation from the pulpit should not be blindly received, but should be carefully compared with the teachings of the Bible.

The Scriptures should be searched “daily.”

The Scriptures should not only be read, but searched.

When the Scriptures are searched men believe.

CHAPTER XXII.

PAUL AT ATHENS.

IT would be interesting to trace the journey of Paul from Berea to Athens, but we know nothing whatever of it except that he was accompanied by some of his Berean converts, who remain with him until he is safely landed in the great metropolis, whose very name has become a synonym for culture and refinement. Here they leave him, and return to their homes with a message to Silas and Timothy to come to him as quickly as possible. Left alone in this great city, where every object attests the guilt of its inhabitants, Paul is painfully oppressed with a sense of dreary isolation and bitter disappointment. He had been compelled to leave Berea in the very midst of a glorious revival, and to turn away from his beloved converts at Thessalonica, whom he earnestly desired to revisit (1 Thess. ii, 17). God's purposes were accomplished by per-

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mitting Satan and wicked men to hurry his servant onward amidst trials and sorrows to spread the gospel far and wide; for they thought persecution would kill the Church, but it only strengthened it. Knowing full well the trials to which his Macedonian converts are exposed, the apostle is overwhelmed with anxious thoughts about them and sympathetic sadness for their sufferings. But this melancholy is soon dispelled, for as he looks around upon the scenes of the gay Grecian city, everywhere exhibiting the unmistakable emblems of iniquity, "his spirit is stirred within him," and he begins at once, single-handed and alone, a heroic contest with cultured infidelity. According to his usual custom, he first enters the synagogue and preaches to his countrymen; but failing to reach them, he turns to the Gentiles, and in the most public thoroughfares proclaims the sublime doctrines of grace. In the Agora, or "market-place," especially was found a curious crowd, who were willing to pause and listen to the strange words of the little Jew. Here on

every hand were costly decorations of art and memorial statues of Solon, Demosthenes, and other great men, while all around were altars to heathen deities and shrines of idolatry, for "every god in Olympus found a place in the Agora." Here also he encountered the two great systems of philosophy at that time so powerful and so prevalent. On the one hand were the Stoics, the followers of Zeno, who taught the horrid doctrine of Pantheism; on the other were the Epicureans, who were materialists and atheists. The one system taught that every thing is God; the other denied the existence of God altogether. In the presence of these rival philosophers this heroic herald of salvation now boldly unfurls the blood-bathed banner of the cross and presents the fundamental truths of the gospel. Instantly curiosity is excited, and while some ridicule others bring against him the same charge which caused his arrest and cruel incarceration at Philippi, and which caused the condemnation of Socrates. But in order that they may gratify their curiosity and hear these

strange truths presented more fully, they invite him away from the noise and confusion of the "market" to the Areopagus, where they were accustomed to hear the most eloquent voices of the world. As the heroic preacher moved out through the bustling crowd, wherever he turned his eyes he beheld the emblems of idolatry. Not only in the Agora did he find altars and statues, but when he turned to the Acropolis he found "one vast composition of architecture and sculpture dedicated to the national glory and to the worship of the gods;" and when he stands on the solemn summit of "Mars' Hill," and looks down on the busy scenes below, he sees everywhere scores of costly shrines and gorgeous temples built in honor of imaginary deities. Thus was the worship of the true God profaned and his honor insulted. No wonder, then, that the spirit of his lone but loyal servant was "stirred within him" by such scenes, or that he poured forth the feelings of his full soul in one of the grandest speeches that ever fell from human lips. The Areopagus, where Paul spoke, had

been celebrated from time immemorial. There, according to tradition, Mars had been tried by the gods; there Socrates had been condemned to death; there Orestes had been tried for a crime which has been embalmed in tragic poetry; there the most august court of the nation and of the world held its sessions; there the greatest criminals had been arraigned, and the most solemn questions of religion discussed. To this memorable spot, overlooking these temples of superstition and shrines of idolatry, Paul is now conducted, and in the presence of the nation's ablest representatives delivers one of the most remarkable discourses on record, "conciliatory in its tone, faultless in its unity, admirable in its development, and replete with facts which underlie all theology." As the little Jew, still bearing the marks of his sufferings at Philippi, rises before his audience he doubtless challenges their profoundest attention. Numerous shrines and statues could be seen in every direction, and to these he points with a graceful gesture, no doubt in attestation of his courteous remark:

“Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious [or, religious].” His great prudence thus shines out through the opening sentence of his address. He was placed in a very trying position, for a single word indiscreetly uttered would have been sufficient to arouse the anger of his auditors; but by this courteous and complimentary introduction he places himself *en rapport* with them at the very outset, and with an ardent and enthusiastic eloquence which holds them spell-bound he continues to give utterance to the feelings which had been raised by the sight of the idolatrous city. As attested by profane history, Athens was one vast votive-offering to the gods, having in it more images than all the rest of Greece; and among these numerous shrines of idolatry there were several, as Pausanias tells us, dedicated “to the Unknown God”—a fact that bears significant testimony to the feeling of unrest and uncertainty which characterized their idolatrous worship. For although they worshiped gods amounting to thirty thousand, still, lest there

might be some other of whom they were ignorant, they erected these nameless altars to his honor. With wonderful skill the apostle seizes upon this fact for the purpose of unfolding to them the personality and character of the true God; and at the same time he vindicates himself from the grave charge of setting forth strange gods, since he only unfolds to them the true character of a God whom they already acknowledge. This God, of whom they confessedly knew so little, he declares to be the "God that made the world and all things therein." Thus, in a single sentence, he teaches the doctrine of the creation, and so contradicts the Epicurean theory that matter is eternal, and that the universe is but the result of a great accident; and in the same utterance he teaches the personality of God as distinct and separate from the world, and contradicts the Pantheistic theory of the Stoics, that God is merely the spirit or reason of the universe, and that matter is inseparable from God. Again, he teaches the unity of the Godhead, and contradicts the heathen idea, so long and

so fondly cherished, of a multiplicity of gods. He begins thus at the very foundation both in eradicating error and in establishing truth, though such a declaration on the part of a friendless stranger is remarkably bold, uttered as it was in the very face of the champions of those systems of philosophy which it so directly attacked. But if this first declaration seems bold, the second seems even bolder; for standing there surrounded by temples as beautiful as human hands could make them, the pride of the whole nation, he does not hesitate to declare that this God of whom he speaks "is Lord of heaven and earth, and dwelleth not in temples made with hands," but is absolutely independent of man. He thus sets forth the true God not only as the Creator but as the owner of the world, and as the source of every blessing; and he contradicts another heathen error—viz., that the gods, in consuming the food and drink offered them in worship, were dependent upon human service. Having declared these fundamental doctrines, he advances a step farther, and interweaves in

his resistless argument another cardinal truth, declaring the unity of the race as it stands correlated with the redemption of the race; and at the same time corrects another error then current—viz., that each nation had a different ancestral origin. In fact, this grand old hero of the gospel, guided by the Spirit of God, wields a two-edged sword throughout this matchless address; and while he boldly affirms the fundamental truths of Christianity, his very affirmations are courteous denials of the false theories of his pagan auditors. If all nations were not represented in Adam, as Paul declares, neither were they all represented in Christ, and the plan of salvation is necessarily a failure to a great extent. The God of whom Paul speaks is the God of redemption; and having shown this, he advances a step farther, and declares that he is also the God of providence, inasmuch as he has fixed the territorial boundaries of each nation and determined its seasons of prosperity. The object in all these providential dealings is to draw men to give honor and homage to the

God who made them, who is not only the author of all their blessings, but the Father of their spirits, as attested by even one of the pagan poets. Thus the speaker advances another step, and declares the Fatherhood of God, and in so doing skillfully appeals to an authority which his audience were willing to acknowledge, and he seeks to impress upon them all the associated truths setting forth the character of the true God. From this premise, admitted by his auditors, he next draws a conclusion against the worship of idols. Man as a spiritual being is manifestly superior to inanimate matter; but man is only the "offspring" of God, and hence, *a fortiori*, God should not be degraded by any material representation. Thus this heroic servant of God, though surrounded on every side by the shrines of idolatry, unhesitatingly rebukes his hearers for such unbecoming worship; but with true Christian charity he hastens to palliate their offense on account of their imperfect knowledge of the true God. Paul himself had obtained pardon because he had sinned

ignorantly (1 Tim. i. 13), and he sees in the ignorance of his heathen auditors a mitigation of their guilt in worshiping idols. But now that the character of the true God had been revealed to them, they would no longer be excusable, and they were exhorted to repent of their sins and reform their lives. This important duty is enforced by the solemn fact that God has appointed a day of judgment and of righteous retribution. Standing there in the Areopagus, the scene of so many trials from time immemorial, how natural that the apostle should call the attention of his audience to that higher and more solemn tribunal before which the whole world must stand. Thus the speaker advances still another step in this incomparable discourse, and sets forth the true God as the Judge of all the earth. The time of the judgment, though not revealed to man, has been definitely fixed, and shall be conducted in accordance with the strictest principles of justice. The one to conduct the trial is to be God's own Son, whom the apostle here designates as a man, purpose-

ly leaving out of view his divine nature lest he should seem to the idolatrous Athenians only to deify a Jewish hero. That Jesus is to be the Judge of the world is attested by the fact of his resurrection from the dead, because it proves him to be the Son of God, and substantiates the truth of all his declarations; at the same time it establishes the doctrine of a general resurrection and of a life beyond the grave, without which there could be no judgment. That Jesus is to be man's Judge is a doctrine full of comfort and encouragement for the believer; for he will only be called to stand in the presence of a loving, sympathetic Friend, who, with a smile-lit countenance, will read from the great statute-book of heaven, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." But that the unrepentant sinner, as he stands helpless amidst the sublime scenes of that awful day, must face the angry frown of an injured and rejected Christ, ought to strike terror to the heart of every unconverted man.

Paul's audience were no doubt very respect-

ful, and listened attentively to the strange statements he made until he spoke of the resurrection of the dead, which was in such direct conflict with the teachings of both the Epicureans and the Stoics, and seemed to them so absurd, that some of them publicly derided the speaker, while others, more respectful but not more serious, declared their desire to hear more of this strange doctrine at some other time. Finding his earnest words ridiculed and rejected, the apostle turns sorrowfully away from his scoffing audience, and amidst their jeers and rude jests leaves the Areopagus and the idolatrous city, never again to enter it, nor even to mention it, so far as history shows. At Philippi and Thessalonica he had met with opposition and persecution, but at each place he was rewarded by seeing a Church founded. At Athens he encounters in the cold indifference of the people a more formidable obstacle, and leaves the city with scarcely any visible results of his labors. His words found a lodgment in the heart of one of the supreme judges of the nation, an un-

known woman, and a few other obscure persons; but not many believed, as Luke's language seems to imply. It is perhaps impossible to find any recorded speech into which so many important truths are compressed as in this short address of Paul's. In it he sets forth God as Creator of all things in contradistinction to the Epicurean idea of the eternity of matter; as a Person, in contradistinction to the Pantheistic idea of the Stoics; as a Unit, in contradistinction to the Polytheistic idea of the Athenians in general; as a Sovereign absolutely independent of man; as the Giver of all good; as the God of providence; as the common Father of all nations; and as the Judge of the world. In addition to this delineation of the divine character, he declares the unity of the human race, the duty of repentance, and the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

Men may take great interest in religion, but unless they worship the true God their religion is vain.

The Athenian altar "to the Unknown God" bears striking testimony to the unrest and uncertainty that characterize idolatry.

The light of nature is not sufficient to reveal God in his true character.

God owns all things, "seeing that he is the Lord of heaven and earth."

God is independent of man, and needs nothing that he can give.

God is the author of every blessing, "seeing he giveth to all life and breath and all things."

"God hath made of one blood all nations of men."

God's providence determines the rise and fall of nations as well as their territorial boundaries.

God is "not far from every one of us."

In God "we live and move and have our being."

Men are the "offspring" of God—made in his image.

God should not be degraded by any material representation.

God "now commandeth all men everywhere to repent."

God "hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained."

Christ's resurrection is the proof and pledge of the judgment.

Paul's audience, like many since, consisted of three classes—those who scoffed, those who procrastinated, and those who believed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PAUL AT CORINTH.

HOW long Paul remained at Athens we cannot tell, but long enough for Silas and Timothy to come from Berea, for they most probably rejoined him there; and being very solicitous about the church at Thessalonica, he sends Timothy back to them with messages of comfort and encouragement. He does not seem to have received any harsh treatment from the cultured Athenians, nor to have been driven away from their city by any violent measures; but finding the cold indifference of the people an insuperable barrier to the spread of the gospel, he turns sorrowfully away from them, and seeks a more inviting field of labor. This he soon finds in the neighboring town of Corinth, which was the city of Grecian commerce, as Athens was the city of Grecian culture. It was at this time the political capital of Greece, and the residence of the Roman

proconsul. It was a "colony," like Philippi, whereas Athens was a "free city," like Thessalonica. It stood some forty-five miles from Athens on the isthmus which unites the Peloponnesus to the main-land, so that through it all land traffic between the peninsula and the rest of Greece must pass. Thus it became a great commercial center; and with riches came luxury and vice, so that, as Farrar says, it was "the Vanity Fair of the Roman Empire—at once the London and the Paris of the first century after Christ." To this wicked city the apostle now comes; and convinced by its situation and surroundings that a church founded there would become the center of a widespread influence for good, he began his labors with that end in view. For some reason, on account of delicate health, or overwhelmed with a sense of loneliness and discouragement in view of the abounding wickedness of the city, or disappointed by his failure at Athens, he was very much depressed when he first began his work in Corinth (1 Cor. ii. 3). His companions had been left behind in Macedonia,

and as the best means for gaining a support, and also for introducing the gospel, he associates himself in business with one of his countrymen who had been expelled from Rome by an edict of the emperor. On account of the frequent tumults raised by the Jews, they were on several occasions banished from the imperial city; and according to Suetonius these tumults were incited by one Chrestus—a common name often used interchangeably with Christus, from which it has been conjectured that Christianity had reached Rome at that early day, and that these tumults were occasioned by the Jews persecuting the Christians, all being classed together by their heathen neighbors. Among others who were driven away from Rome by this edict of Claudius were Aquila and Priscilla. Finding many of their countrymen in Corinth, and that it was a good place for business, they concluded to settle here and begin their occupation of tent-making. The rabbinical law required that every father should teach his son a trade; and in compliance with that law Christ became a

carpenter (Mark vi. 3), and Paul a tent-maker, which was a common occupation in Cilicia, his native country. But the hand of Providence so ordered it that he learned in boyhood the very trade that would now bring him into close association with these persons who should ever afterward be such faithful friends and able assistants in preaching the gospel, and the same Providence now brings him to their home. They are not Christians, but countrymen and fellow-craftsmen of the apostle. He finds them congenial companions; and while this association was a temporal blessing to Paul, it became a great spiritual blessing to Aquila and his wife, resulting as it doubtless did in their conversion to Christianity. Alone in Corinth, without a church to support him or even sympathize with him, he found it necessary to labor for his daily bread; but he never allowed his labors at tent-making to interfere with the more important duty of preaching the gospel. As he sat weaving the coarse, rough hair-cloth from which the tents were made, he doubtless engaged in many an earnest conver-

sation with his fellow-workmen, while on the Sabbath he repaired to the synagogue and there publicly proclaimed the glad tidings of salvation. He was thus engaged for some time when Silas and Timothy, having discharged their mission in Macedonia, rejoin their friend and leader, bringing with them a liberal contribution from the Macedonian churches (2 Cor. xi. 9). This testimonial of the good-will and affection of his converts so encouraged the heart of the apostle that he renewed his efforts with greater diligence and devotion than ever before; and his necessities being relieved by this contribution from his friends, he was enabled to give more of his time to preaching the gospel. But this fresh outburst of zeal and earnestness aroused the opposition of the Jews, and finding them unwilling to listen to his preaching he turns his attention to the Gentiles. Having been forbidden the use of the synagogue perhaps, he finds a convenient preaching-place in the immediate vicinity, in the house of a converted Gentile. But though the apostle had been re-

jected by the large majority of his countrymen, there were a few who were converted to Christianity through his preaching. Among the number was the "chief ruler of the synagogue"—*i. e.*, the moderator or president of the bench of elders by which it was governed. This man was one of the very few persons whom Paul baptized (1 Cor. i. 14), and with his entire family was received into the Church, thus affording another New Testament example of household religion. In addition to this family many of the Corinthians were converted through the apostle's preaching, and were added to the Church through the initiatory rite of baptism. For awhile the arrival of Silas and Timothy cheered and encouraged Paul, but his bold rejection by the Jews seems to have reacted upon his feelings, causing a return of his despondency, which tempted him to stop preaching altogether. To counteract this morbid melancholy on the part of his servant, the Lord appears to him in a vision with assurances of divine help, divine protection, and abundant success. The "Lord had

many people there " who were as yet worshipping at heathen altars; and the faithful missionary, thus encouraged, renews his labors and is rewarded by seeing a strong church established in Corinth, another in the adjacent town of Cenchrea (Rom. xvi. 1), and perhaps still others elsewhere in Achaia (2 Cor. i. 1). In this work he was engaged altogether about "a year and six months," and in addition to preaching he here inaugurated another method of doing great good. The contribution sent by the Macedonian churches and the tidings brought by Timothy in regard to them caused the apostle to write a letter to his persecuted brethren at Thessalonica. Although this church was composed mostly of Gentiles who were only a short time before ignorant idolaters, the report made by Silas and Timothy was, in the main, favorable and satisfactory (1 Thess. iii. 6-10). But naturally enough they had fallen into some errors which it was necessary to correct; and, besides, they needed comfort and encouragement amidst the trials and persecutions to which they were exposed.

To express his great love for and interest in these Thessalonian converts, to correct their errors, and to give them needed comfort and instruction, were the objects Paul had in view in writing his first letter to them. This letter stands first in chronological order of all the apostle's writings, and was written A.D. 52 or 53, not long after the arrival of Silas and Timothy, who share with the apostle the honor of sending this initial Epistle (1 Thess. i. 1). Not many months after this he finds it necessary to write them a second letter, inasmuch as the first had failed to correct the error into which they had fallen in regard to the second coming of Christ. This error had wrought great injury to the Church, and in fact was likely to result in its complete destruction, as we learn from the apostle's letter. The letter itself gives evidence that it was written at a time when Paul was beset with fears and surrounded by persecutions (2 Thess. iii. 2), about the time perhaps when his countrymen became enraged against him and drove him from the synagogue. At first his converts

were gathered from the humbler walks of life (1 Cor. i. 26, vi. 10, 11), but when "Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue," repudiated Judaism and was baptized into the Christian Church by Paul himself (1 Cor. i. 14), it aroused violent opposition on the part of the Jews. In this case the apostle seems to have departed from his usual custom in leaving the rite of baptism to be performed by others, as something entirely secondary to the great work of preaching the gospel. The conversion of the pastor of the synagogue congregation, by reason of his high standing and influential position, was thought to be so important that the apostle signalizes it by baptizing him with his own hands. Besides this prominent Jew, he also baptizes of his Gentile converts Gaius and the household of Stephanas, which constituted the nucleus around which the Corinthian Church was afterward gathered (1 Cor. xvi. 15). The conversion of Crispus and his public reception into the Christian Church caused the Jews to renew their persecutions against the missionaries; and taking advantage

of a change of governors, they rudely arrest the apostle and bring him before the judgment-seat. Achaia, being a senatorial province, was governed by a man who acted for the consul and was appointed by the senate at Rome. The name of the new proconsul was Gallio, and he was probably appointed to his position A.D. 53 or 54. He was a brother of Seneca, the celebrated philosopher, and is described as a man of amiable disposition and pleasing address, honest in his convictions, and firm in maintaining them. His appearance in Corinth was the signal for the Jews to carry out their preconcerted plan to destroy the apostle, and at an early day they arraign him before the governor upon the same accusation which had led to his imprisonment at Philippi. But Gallio probably knew something of the Christian sect, at that time becoming implanted in several cities of the empire, and like all the heathen of that day he regarded them as merely a sect of the Jews, whose religion was allowed by the Roman laws, and he declined to interfere in their disputes. Had the charge

been the violation of some civil law, he would have carefully investigated the case; but considering it only as an unimportant difference of opinion in regard to some religious technicalities, he dismisses them without a hearing. Thus the rage of the Jews was doubtless still further increased, while the Greeks were made to rejoice over the discomfiture of the hated nation, and in the quarrel that ensued Sosthenes, who after the conversion of Crispus had been made "chief ruler of the synagogue," was beaten in the very presence of the governor. The accusers now find themselves involved in disgrace, while the sympathies of the public are with Paul, who after this continued his labors under the protection of the government, and doubtless with greater success than ever before. Thus Providence protected his servant as he had promised (Acts xviii. 10), and crowned his labors with abundant success. How long after this he remained in Corinth we do not know, but having a desire to be present once more in Jerusalem at one of the yearly Jewish festivals, he takes his departure

in company with Aquila and Priscilla—those firm friends in whose house he had found a home—and sets sail for Ephesus, which stood related to Corinth something as New York now does to Liverpool. Here he apparently remained over Sabbath, and as usual entered the synagogue and preached the gospel to his countrymen. At once their curiosity is excited, and they urge him to remain longer with them, but his plans had been otherwise formed; and promising to return to them if possible, he bids adieu to Aquila and his wife, who remain in Ephesus, and again entering the ship he continues his voyage across the Mediterranean, landing at Cesarea, the military capital of Judea, some seventy or eighty miles from Jerusalem. From this point he hurries onward to the Jewish capital, but whether he arrived in time to attend the festival to which he so eagerly looked forward, we do not know. Apparently he remained here but a short time, and then proceeded on his way to Antioch, from which he had been first sent forth upon his missionary work. It may be that he re-

visited his old home at Tarsus, but the inspired historian is silent in regard to it, as he also is in reference to what occurred in the church at Antioch when the great missionary stood once more in their presence at the end of his second eventful missionary journey.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

God's providence overrules for the accomplishment of his purposes all man's actions.

Honest labor is right and praiseworthy.

Our daily labors should not keep us from entering the sanctuary on the Sabbath.

Christian companionship is a great blessing.

Earnestness on the part of Christians excites the opposition of sinners.

Persistently impenitent sinners are moral suicides.

The noble and the ignoble, the prominent and the obscure, are saved upon the same terms.

The most eminent of God's servants are but men, and need encouragement and strength from above.

“If God be for us, who can be against us?”

Many of God's people are still worshiping at heathen altars who will yet be won by the preaching of the gospel to enter the service of their true Master.

Prejudice and persecution are never satisfied.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY.

IN revisiting the home church at Antioch Paul's object was probably threefold—to make a report of his labors in the foreign field, to refresh his own soul by Christian companionship, and to rest and recuperate his health; and having accomplished these objects, although already “Paul the aged,” being now more than fifty years old, he starts upon his third missionary tour, which lasted some four years, most probably from the autumn of A.D. 54 to that of A.D. 58. On this journey he was still accompanied by Timothy (1 Cor. iv. 17), but Silas most likely remained at Jerusalem, where he first met Paul, and in which church he had formerly held a leading position (Acts xv. 22). He seems, after his separation from Paul, to have become the companion and assistant of Peter, by whom that apostle sent his letter to the churches which Silas had

formerly visited in company with the great missionary (1 Pet. v. 12).

Paul's object in making this third journey was to encourage and instruct the churches he had already established (Acts xviii. 23), to secure from them a contribution for the relief of the poor Christians in Judea (Acts xxiv. 17, Rom. xv. 25, 26, 1 Cor. xvi. 1-4, 2 Cor. viii., ix.), and to redeem his promise given to the Jews at Ephesus (Acts xviii. 21). The first part of this tour we are unable to trace, but he doubtless revisited the churches established by himself and Barnabas upon their first missionary journey, and visited by himself and Silas upon the second missionary tour. He would thus pass within sight of his childhood home on the banks of the Cydnus, while Timothy would mingle again with his former friends and boyhood companions at Lystra. After leaving these sacred scenes and hallowed associations he passes on to the churches previously established in Phrygia and Galatia, which he visits "in order," and finally by some unknown route reaches Ephesus, where he re-

mains nearly three years (Acts xx. 31). From thence he passes over into Macedonia, and visits the churches established there. Nearly every step of the homeward route can be traced by the geographical references in the twentieth and twenty-first chapters of Acts.

Some time between Paul's first and second visit to Ephesus there had come to the city "a certain Jew named Apollos." He was a native of Alexandria, one of the chief cities of Egypt, celebrated as a great literary center, and possessed at one time of the largest library in the world. The resident Jews, imitating the scholarship of the Greeks, studied the Jewish writings with critical exactness, in proof of which we find that it was in this city and by Jews that the Septuagint version of the Old Testament was made. Reared in this cultured city, with easy access to one of the best universities of that day, Apollos became thoroughly educated not only in the arts and sciences, but especially in the more important matters revealed in the sacred Scriptures; and he was

not only well versed in the contents of the Old Testament, but he was remarkably fluent and skillful in interpreting its meaning. He was apparently a disciple of John the Baptist, and in this way had learned something in regard to Jesus of Nazareth as the true Messiah. The Greek word denoting this fact signifies "to learn orally," or by report; and the meaning no doubt is that he had only heard by report, or in an imperfect way, of the life and death of Jesus Christ. But finding the Old Testament prophecies strikingly fulfilled therein, he at once became a believer in him as the true Messiah; and not content with that, he earnestly undertook the important work of persuading others to accept the glorious fact. Although so zealous, he had only a partial apprehension of the truth, for as yet he "knew only the baptism of John." He perhaps had heard that Christians were baptized, but, like many since his day, supposed that Christian baptism was the same as that of the great forerunner of Christ. He may never have heard of the baptism of Pentecost, and knew noth-

ing of the spiritual significance of the symbol by which it is set forth. But notwithstanding his ignorance of the true significance of baptism and of the work of the Holy Spirit, he was convinced that Jesus was indeed the Christ; and entering the synagogue, he undertook to show his deluded countrymen how all the Messianic prophecies had been fulfilled in him.

The report that a new rabbi was thus preaching the gospel in the synagogue soon reached the ears of Aquila and his wife, and at once they went to hear him. Finding the eloquent preacher ignorant of some of the fundamental truths of Christianity, they invite him to their home and turn their house into a sort of theological seminary for the instruction of this man, who afterward became an earnest and efficient herald of the gospel. Of this interesting and important work the wife, having more leisure perhaps, doubtless did the greater part; at least, the incident shows that she was a woman of more than ordinary power and culture. How long Apollos

remained under these preceptors we do not know, but having become thoroughly indoctrinated, and learning from these disciples of Paul's work in Corinth, of the hopefulness of the field, and of their need of preaching, he determines to go to their aid. To assist him in this undertaking his friends furnish him with a letter of recommendation, which would give him access at once to any church he might visit, and especially to the Corinthian church, of which Aquila and his wife were doubtless still members. He no doubt received a cordial welcome from the Corinthian Christians, and, through the grace of God aiding and supplementing his labors, was of great assistance to them, especially in confounding their Jewish adversaries, whom he met in public debate. His great learning and intimate acquaintance with the Bible made him a formidable antagonist; and by comparing the Messianic prophecies with their manifest fulfillment in the life and death of Christ, he was instrumental in converting large numbers of the Jews to Christianity, as shown by the fact

that afterward many of the church desired to make him the leader of a faction (1 Cor. i. 12, iii. 4-6). Thus his work in Corinth was productive of both good and evil to the Church; and to heal the schism Paul found it necessary to write them a long letter. But Apollos was not the cause of this schism—he was merely the innocent occasion of it.

While the eloquent Alèxandrian is preaching in Corinth, Paul and Timothy arrive at Ephesus, the most important city of Asia Minor, and the chief emporium of trade in the East. It was the seat of wealth, culture, and luxury, and especially celebrated for its Temple of Diana, one of the “seven wonders of the world.” Through the preaching of Apollos, perhaps, some of the Ephesian Jews had been converted to Christianity; but the preacher himself being ignorant of some of the leading doctrines, they received only a partial knowledge of the truth. When Paul came and learned from Aquila and Priscilla of the ignorance of Apollos in regard to the significance of baptism and the work of the Holy Ghost,

he at once—concluding that his converts must also be ignorant of them—catechised them in regard to these important matters. As Jews they must have known something about the Holy Ghost from the teachings of the Old Testament, but they knew nothing about his work as symbolized by baptism. Christ commanded his disciples to baptize “into the name” (εἰς τὸ ὄνομα) of the Trinity, but these disciples had received only the “baptism of John.” Carefully explaining the difference between John’s baptism and Christian baptism, Paul administers the ordinance in the name of Christ; and laying his hands upon them, in accordance with apostolic custom, they were indued with the Holy Ghost and endowed with supernatural gifts, just as their brethren were on the day of Pentecost when Peter commanded them all to be baptized regardless of John’s baptism. It has been conjectured that these men were Gentiles on account of their ignorance of the Holy Spirit, but nothing is known of either their previous or subsequent history.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

To edify and develop Christians is as important as to convert sinners.

The faithful preacher delights to visit his former fields of labor.

A man may be a true disciple, and yet be entirely ignorant of many important truths of the gospel.

Fervor of spirit and culture of mind combined make an efficient preacher.

Private Christians may do an important work for Christ.

Many Christians live beneath their privileges.

A man "mighty in the Scriptures" makes a formidable antagonist for infidelity.

The Messianic prophecies unless fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth have never been fulfilled, and never can be.

Christ's life and death exactly tally with Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah.

A man's work and influence go on long after he has passed away.

John's baptism was not Christian baptism, and therefore can determine nothing as to the mode in which this ordinance should be administered.

The personality and work of the Holy Spirit are fundamental truths.

CHAPTER XXV.

PAUL AT EPHESUS.

ALTHOUGH no mention is made of Aquila and his wife in the inspired history, yet it is highly probable that Paul again found a home with these friends upon his arrival in Ephesus, and it may be a second time engaged with them in the work of tent-making; for in his address to the Ephesian elders at a later day he tells them that he had provided for himself and companions with the labor of his own hands (Acts xx. 34). Thus his life in Corinth is re-enacted, for after the labors of the week he enters the synagogue on Sabbath, and there preaches the gospel to his countrymen, seeking both by doctrine and exhortation to set forth the true nature of Christ's kingdom. In this work he continued for "three months," and, as elsewhere, his preaching was attended by a twofold result. Some believed, but others were "hardened and believed not,"

and as a natural consequence they maligned and slandered the gospel that condemned their sins, as sinners have continued to do in every age of the world. Finding his deluded countrymen unwilling longer to listen to him, the earnest old missionary again turns reluctantly away from them and preaches to the Gentiles. Taking his disciples with him, he soon finds a suitable place for preaching in a building occupied as a school-house, the proprietor of which was doubtless one of the converts. This arrangement was so satisfactory that he continued it for "two years" or more. His entire stay in Ephesus covered a period of three years (Acts xx. 31), and during that long time he not only preached publicly, but "from house to house," with such earnestness and success that the whole province was evangelized and several of "the seven churches of Asia" were organized, either by the apostle in person, or under his supervision (Col. iv. 13-16). Some forty years after this Pliny, in his famous letter to the Emperor Trajan, bears testimony that strikingly con-

firms the statement made by the inspired historian, for he speaks of great numbers of all ages and classes, both in the cities and country districts of the neighboring province of Bithynia, who were Christians. Ephesus was a center of superstition and witchcraft, and as Moses was indued with power to counteract and overcome the influence of the Egyptian sorcerers, so Paul was here given miraculous power to confound these superstitious Ephesians. The character of these miracles was peculiar in that neither the personal agency nor even the personal presence of the apostle was necessary to their performance. A healing influence seemed to emanate from his very person and communicate itself to articles of dress, by means of which it was conveyed from place to place; and many diseased persons, as well as many demoniacs, were thus restored to health. Here, as elsewhere, the demoniac is carefully distinguished from other invalids, thereby showing that he was not the victim of mere physical or mental disease. Some of the Ephesians were no doubt won to Christ by

means of these divine testimonials, but others were thereby only stimulated to greater efforts in their magical arts. Among these were "certain vagabond Jews," who went about from place to place professing to cure the sick by means of incantations. These sought to give greater credit to their jugglery by associating therewith the names of Jesus and his servant Paul, thereby classing the apostle with the magicians and confounding Christianity with magic. Prominent among these Ephesian magicians was the family of a leading priest in one of the synagogues of the city; or possibly he was an apostate Jew, who had become one of the priests in the Temple of Diana. He had "seven sons," who undertook to heal a demoniac by using the names of Jesus and Paul, but the evil spirit replied to their command that he recognized Christ's authority, and was familiar with the name of Paul, but he repudiated any claims to power and authority that these pretenders might make; and having thus rebuked their pretensions, the man leaped upon them with all the preter-

natural strength of a madman, and soon put them to flight. Such an occurrence could not long be kept secret, and it so unmistakably proved the superiority of Christianity to the magic of the Ephesians that they were overwhelmed with awe and gave honor to the name of Christ, by whose power and authority the miracles were performed. Among those who had become insnared by these magicians were a number of professed Christians, who, now convinced of their error, voluntarily burn their books and magical appliances. These books were no doubt parchment or papyrus rolls containing treatises on magic, and also written amulets, or charms, supposed to possess some magical power. These they bring together and publicly burn in one great heap; and having thus removed the means of temptation forever from their reach, they then, but not till then, stop to calculate the value of their burned property. Ephesus being a Greek city, it is pretty certain that the "piece of silver" mentioned by Luke was the *drachma*, which was equivalent to the Roman *denarius*, or

about fifteen cents of our present coin; so that the total value of the property destroyed was between \$7,000 and \$10,000, and really equivalent to a much larger sum at the present time, as each of these pieces was then the price of a day's labor. In consequence of this purification of the church and this self-sacrifice on the part of individuals, the spiritual strength and influence of Christians were increased; and sinners, convinced of the reality of religion, gladly identified themselves with the people of God.

It is hardly probable that Paul would have remained three long years at Ephesus, within such easy reach of Corinth, without paying his friends there at least a short visit; and, without having any direct statement of the fact, we gather from his letters to that church (2 Cor. xii. 14-21, xiii. 1, 2) that he did make such a visit, and found his converts in a fearful state of degeneracy (2 Cor. ii. 1, xii. 21). This visit was most probably a very short one, but it revealed to him the true condition of the church, a report of which had perhaps

reached him through others. He at first tries kindness and conciliation, in the hope of thus reaching the offenders and winning them back from their wanderings; but he soon finds that such mild measures are not sufficient, and he writes them a short letter, which has not been preserved, in which he directs them to excommunicate the offenders (1 Cor. v. 9-12). About this time two of the apostle's companions undertake a journey to Macedonia, and it was perhaps by one of these that the letter was sent. One of them was Timothy, the well-known friend of Paul, and the other Erastus, who most probably held some important office in Corinth, and was returning home (Rom. xvi. 23, 2 Tim. iv. 20). In the meantime members of a prominent Corinthian family visit Ephesus and give the apostle an account of the schism and other troubles in their church (1 Cor. i. 11), and not long after messengers arrive bearing an answer to the short letter he had hurriedly sent by Erastus. The church claims to be ignorant of the apostle's meaning, and asks an explanation of several

things referred to in the letter. To explain the perplexing questions, to heal the schism in the church, and to elevate its degenerate members to a higher plane of spiritual life and Christian experience, were therefore the objects the apostle had in writing what is known as the "First Epistle to the Corinthians." It was written from Ephesus A.D. 57, a short time before Paul left the city on his tour through Macedonia. After sending this letter perhaps by the hand of some of his former converts in Corinth (1 Cor. xvi. 17), he tarried awhile longer in Ephesus (1 Cor. xvi. 8, 9) in order to avail himself of the opportunity of preaching to the immense multitudes that assembled in the city to attend the famous Ephesian games in honor of Diana. This goddess was the tutelary divinity of Ephesus, and the magnificent temple erected in her honor was its crowning glory, and has ever been regarded as one of the "seven wonders of the world." Numerous "shrines," or small models of this temple, were manufactured to meet the superstitious fancies and idolatrous

tastes of the multitudes who flocked to the city to engage in the annual festivities held in honor of the goddess. Thus an important trade had sprung up, and the makers and vendors of these miniature temples and images were growing rich. But as the preaching of Paul resulted in converting the people to Christianity it destroyed superstition, and so hindered their prosperity that their success decreased just in proportion as that of the apostle increased. Naturally, therefore, they watched him with a jealous eye; and taking advantage of the occasion when the city was thronged with visitors, they raise a riot and soon gather a mob for the purpose of destroying the hated preacher. The instigator of this riot was a man named Demetrius, who was a manufacturer and wholesale dealer in these silver shrines, which were so eagerly purchased by the numerous worshipers of Diana as memorials of their visit to Ephesus. Calling together the artisans who made the images, and who received lucrative wages for their labor, he shows them how the growth of

Christianity would diminish their gains and destroy their occupation. He thus adroitly appeals to their selfishness by showing how their worldly interests are involved. This he does by declaring that the apostle's preaching was constantly diminishing the number of Diana's worshipers not only in Ephesus, but throughout all Asia; and hereby this enemy of Christianity bears striking testimony to the success of the gospel and the ceaseless labors of the grand old missionary. This rapid spread of the gospel was manifestly injurious to the material interests of Demetrius and his fellow-craftsmen; for as men became Christians and ceased to worship Diana they ceased to attend her annual festivities and to purchase the models of her temple and image from the manufacture and sale of which these men derived their wealth.

Having thus aroused the selfish interests of his auditors, the shrewd silversmith next appeals to their pride and religious sentiment by showing how their goddess would be dishonored and her worship neglected unless the

growth of Christianity was arrested. The whole month of May was spent in festivities in honor of Diana, and the city was now filled with visitors from all parts of Asia, so that the present was the harvest-time of Demetrius and his fellow-craftsmen, and hence any falling off in their trade would be at once keenly felt. The words of the avaricious silversmith were an unconscious prophecy of what has since occurred; for to-day the "goddess Diana is despised" and her "magnificence destroyed." But they were intended by him to arouse his companions in trade—and they had the desired effect; for so intense did their excitement become that they rushed into the streets and for a considerable time made the city echo and re-echo with the wild and clamorous cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" The shrine-sellers, maddened at the prospect of losing their gains, were still further excited by the oaths and curses of their workmen because of the supposed reduction in wages, or perhaps loss of employment altogether; and as they hurried forth into the streets full of rage,

to wreak vengeance upon the object of their hate, they were joined by hundreds of idlers whom the festivities had drawn to Ephesus, until "the whole city was filled with confusion." The mob no doubt went directly to the house of Aquila in search of Paul, but failing to find him they wreak their vengeance upon his friends (Rom. xvi. 4-23, Acts xx. 4, xxvii. 2, 1 Cor. i. 14, Col. iv. 10, Phil. ii. 4), and drag them into the "theater"—an immense unroofed inclosure, with tiers of stone seats variously estimated as capable of accommodating from twenty-five thousand to fifty thousand people. Finding his friends thus exposed to danger, Paul, with his usual chivalrous courtesy and courage, sought to share it, and if possible extricate them from it; but some of his Ephesian converts, fully understanding the spirit and feelings of their enraged countrymen, protested against such needless exposure; and in this protest some of the city officials joined.

Ten men called "Asiarchs" were chosen annually from the rich and great, whose official

duty it was to superintend and bear the expense of the games and festivals held in honor of the emperor and the gods. Some of these officers were personal friends of Paul, and perhaps secret Christians, for his gentlemanly bearing secured for him friends among all classes, and everywhere won the respect of those in official positions with whom he was brought in contact (Acts xiii. 7-12, xxiv. 10-25, xiv. 26, xxvii. 43). These Asiarchs evidently knew where he was concealed at this time, and perhaps had themselves aided him to escape the fury of the mob. They now send him a message to keep away from the theater, well knowing that he would be killed unless he did so. In the meantime the excited crowd gathered around the prisoners in the theater, and "some cried one thing and some another," for, mob-like, many of them were altogether ignorant of the cause of the riot. The Jews, fearing that they would be confounded with the Christians, and that the rioters would thus wreak vengeance upon them, sought to explain the difference between the

two sects, and for this purpose selected one of their number who was possibly himself a "workman of like occupation" with Demetrius (2 Tim. iv. 14), and supposed to have influence with him. But no sooner did he attempt to speak than his foreign accent, his unmistakable features, and his characteristic dress betrayed the nationality of the hated Jew, and instead of quelling his presence only increased the excitement of the mob, which broke forth in one prolonged, clamorous cry, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!" which was not only an expression of attachment to the goddess, but according to heathen ideas was itself an act of worship (1 Kings xviii. 26, Matt. vi. 7). At last a reaction came in the excitement of the mob, and they were willing to listen to words of counsel from one of the chief officials of the city. He was the keeper of the public archives and president of all public gatherings, so that perhaps no one was so well fitted to quell the riot. He was a man of influence both officially and personally as shown by his speech, which is a model of calm

argument and judicious tact. According to their traditions the image of Diana fell from the home of Jupiter, the chief of their deities. After alluding to this fact the cool-headed "town clerk" asserts that the attachment of the Ephesians for the worship of their goddess was too great and too well known to be abandoned under any circumstances, and hence the folly of the mob in supposing that a few insignificant strangers could overthrow it. This conciliatory argument was still further strengthened by a reference to the well-known character and conduct of the missionaries; for Paul and his associates were uniformly courteous, and won their converts not by rude invective or violent denunciation, but by a kind yet positive presentation of the truth. Another evidence of the folly of the course pursued by the mob was found in the fact that courts had been established for the very purpose of considering just such cases as the one presented by Demetrius, and were in session at that very moment, as the language of the "town clerk" seemed to imply. All that was

necessary was for the complainants to make a formal accusation and the defendants to put in a rejoinder and proceed with a regular trial; or, if the matter was of such a public nature that it could not be settled by a private lawsuit, they had only to appeal to the proconsul, and he was ready to call a "lawful assembly;" so that in either case the course that had been pursued was both unnecessary and dangerous, for the Roman law, to which they were subject, made such conduct a capital offense, and they were liable to be called before the Roman authorities to answer for these riotous proceedings, with the possibility that they might thereby lose their lives, or at any rate their liberty. Having brought his argument to a climax and tranquilized the crowd, the discreet "town clerk" formally dismisses the motley multitude, and in a little while the theater is empty, God having thus used the eloquence of this Greek magistrate to protect his servant. The danger being now over, Paul comes forth from his place of concealment; and after assuring himself of the safety of the church, he

gives them his farewell salutation and begins his journey to Macedonia.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

Ministers should preach the gospel "boldly" and confidently.

Religion is reasonable, and admits of argumentation.

In all their preaching ministers should "reason persuasively."

Men are hardened by resisting the influence of the truth and disobeying known duty.

Those who resist the gospel usually "speak evil" of it.

Public controversy with the avowed enemies of the gospel is rarely profitable.

The influence of the earnest worker for Christ extends beyond the scene of his labors in an ever widening circle.

When occasion requires it God can work "special miracles" to confound and convince the enemies of his cause.

In every age of the world there have been those who have attempted to counterfeit Christianity.

The devils recognize the power and authority of Jesus.

True faith and sincere repentance lead to the confessing and forsaking of sin.

Men may be true Christians, though guilty of many faults and follies.

The confession of sin should be as public as its commission.

When true Christians become convinced that certain conduct is wrong they will give it up.

In the sight of a truly converted man, the possession of property is but a secondary consideration when compared with that of a good conscience.

When the Church is purified, then "mightily grows the word of God and prevails."

CHAPTER XXVI.

PAUL'S WINTER OF A.D. 58.

PAUL'S anxiety concerning the Corinthian church was so great that shortly after writing his first letter to them he sends Titus in person to enforce the admonitions that he had given, and to look after the collection for the poor Christians in Judea. He was expected to discharge this mission and meet Paul at Troas shortly after Pentecost. But the riot in Ephesus had perhaps caused the old missionary to leave the city sooner than he had expected, and when he came to Troas he found that Titus had not arrived. In the hope that his young friend would soon come with tidings that a brighter day had dawned upon Corinth, he began to preach the gospel with good prospects for the early organization of a church (2 Cor. ii. 12). But soon his impatience to see Titus and hear the news from his erring brethren in Corinth causes him to cease his labors and embark for Philippi (2 Cor. ii.

13). Here it was that he had organized the first church upon European soil, and of all his converts these had been the most free from fault and had shown the most devoted attachment to himself. Time and again they had given him substantial evidence of their appreciation of his labors among them, notwithstanding their poverty (Phil. iv. 16, 2 Cor. viii. 2, xi. 9), and he in turn in writing to them never once censures, but often praises them. Among these noble people he found a gracious welcome; and in addition to those whom he had received into the Church under such trying circumstances years before, he here met also with Timothy (2 Cor. i. 1), his favorite companion and "beloved son in the Lord." But the kindly ministrations of these loving friends could not make him forget the troubles in the Corinthian church, nor lessen his impatience for the coming of Titus. While he is thus impatiently waiting he determines to write a second letter to the Corinthians, the first part of which has frequent references to the frailty of his bodily health (2 Cor. iv. 7 to

2 Cor. v. 10, 2 Cor. xii. 7-9), and gives abundant evidence of the morbid and melancholy condition of his mind. But before it was half finished Titus arrived at Philippi with tidings which greatly relieved the anxiety of the apostle (2 Cor. vii. 4-9), and the latter part of the letter is vocal with joy and gladness. The church had excommunicated some of the offenders and had shown the deepest penitence on account of their sins; but there was still a minority who were influenced by certain Judaizers (2 Cor. xi. 4, 7, 22), like those encountered by Paul at Antioch (Acts xv. 1, 2). These sought to disparage the apostle, and to persuade the Corinthians to reject his authority, so that there is a blending of the shadow with the sunshine, and a mingling of the minor chords of sadness with the fuller notes of joy even in the last portion of the letter. Anxious that the church should receive this letter as soon as possible, Paul intrusts it to Titus and two companions who are sent back to Corinth to complete the collection to be taken in that church (2 Cor. viii. 18-22), so that it may

be ready when he shall arrive on his way to Jerusalem. The apostle felt the deepest interest in this collection not only because he sympathized with his poor brethren in Judea, but because he believed that it would tend to allay the prejudice which the Jewish party entertained against the Gentile Christians. The principles by which their contributions were to be governed he had set forth in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xvi. 1-4), and are well worthy of serious consideration and universal imitation. To these principles he again refers in his second letter (2 Cor. viii. 12, ix. 7), and delicately contrasts the wealth of Corinth with the poverty of the Macedonians, whose generosity was already conspicuous. Their contributions were no niggardly gifts wrung from covetousness, but they were free-will offerings, abundant even beyond their means (2 Cor. viii. 1-4); and in this liberality we can well believe that the poverty-stricken church at Philippi stood pre-eminent, as it did upon other occasions (Phil. iv. 10, 15, 16, 2 Cor. xi. 9).

After the departure of Titus, Paul continued to preach to the churches in Macedonia, gladly availing himself of the opportunity of presenting more fully the doctrines of grace in those places from which he had been driven by persecution during his former visit. But not content with this semi-pastoral work, he resumes his missionary labors and pushes out into the interior as far as Illyricum (Rom. xv. 19). How long he continued this evangelistic work we do not know, but at last the time arrived when he thought it prudent to visit his inconsistent and rebellious converts at Corinth. For many long months their dissensions and corruptions had weighed heavily upon his mind and heart, and in fact it was doubtless this burdensome "care of all the churches" and the anxious solicitude which they occasioned him that caused in large measure his mental depression and great physical frailty. Winter had already set in before he reached the great commercial metropolis, and as he approached the well-known harbor the gloomy season doubtless harmonized with his own

feelings. He painfully realized that he was returning to friends who had forgotten his love and to enemies who disparaged his office. But he was conscious of apostolic authority, and he determined to purify the Church at all hazards. It is true that a few of the Corinthian converts had remained faithful—*e. g.*, Erastus, the city treasurer; Stephanas, the first convert; Fortunatus and Achaicus, who had visited him in Ephesus; and Gaius, whose hospitable home now stood ready to welcome him—but the majority had not “walked worthy of their high vocation” by any means. As he enters the house of Gaius (Rom. xvi. 23) with a heart filled with conflicting emotions, he finds new trouble awaiting him. Intelligence had lately reached Corinth that his converts in Galatia, for whom he had entertained a peculiar affection, and whose love for him had ever been so conspicuous, were forsaking his teachings and yielding to the proselyting influences of those Judaizing teachers who had already wrought so much evil in the churches, and who seemed determined to counteract if possible

the apostle's influence by making his converts observe the rites and ceremonies of the Jews. It was to crush out the influence of these adversaries that he had come to Corinth, and now he learns that they are busy sowing the seeds of discord in the very church where he had least expected their presence. To forestall their efforts, he at once writes a letter to the Galatians, which begins with an abruptness and severity that show his sense of their great danger and breathes a spirit of sadness such as one would naturally feel when writing to fickle and faithless friends. This defection among the Galatians doubtless made Paul more anxious than ever to purify the church at Corinth, and in the exercise of his apostolic authority he excommunicates the offenders, and seeks both by warning and entreaty to heal the dissensions which had so long existed and had caused so much evil. In this work he was engaged some three months, and while thus engaged a prominent member of the neighboring church of Cenchrea undertakes a journey to Rome for the purpose of transact-

ing some private business (Rom. xvi. 1), and at once he determines to avail himself of the opportunity of sending a letter to his brethren in the imperial city whom he had so long desired to visit (Rom. i. 13). The immediate object he had in writing was to prepare them for a visit, which he now hoped soon to make. The founder of this church is unknown, but the character of its members was exceptionally good (Rom. i. 8, xv. 14), and many of them were personal friends of the apostle (Rom. xvi. 3-15), especially Aquila and his wife, with whom he had so long labored, and who had some time before this returned to their former home. To unfold the great doctrine of justification by faith, and the kindred doctrines which cluster around it and grow out of it, was the object of this the grandest and most important of all Paul's letters. Thus four of the most interesting and important of the Epistles are associated with Corinth; two of them (1 and 2 Corinthians) were written to the church at that place, and two others (Galatians and Romans) were written during the apostle's so-

journey there, and all were written within a few months of each other, A.D. 57 and 58. Having completed his work in the church and secured their contribution, Paul's purpose was to sail in the early spring directly for Syria; but learning of a plot on the part of his Jewish enemies to take his life, he changed his plans and departed by another route into Macedonia, accompanied by several brethren who went as representatives of their churches, having in charge the collection that had been secured for the Christians in Judea (Acts xx. 4). These all pass on as far as Troas, while Paul remains for a few days with his friends at Philippi, where he is rejoined by Luke, his former companion and friend, who henceforth accompanies him in all his journeys, even to Rome, as his constant use of the first person "we" clearly shows. It is possible that Luke, who had been left in charge of the church at Philippi when Paul and Silas had been driven away by persecution, may have continued as its pastor until now, so that a little time was necessary to enable him to make his prepara-

tions for leaving a people with whom he had been so long associated, or the delay might have been occasioned by the delicate health of the apostle, who tarried here that he might receive medical treatment at the hands of "the beloved physician." At any rate, immediately after the Passover feast they sailed from Philippi, and on account of contrary winds, perhaps, were "five days" in reaching Troas, whereas they had previously made the same voyage in two (Acts xvi. 11, 12). This was the third time the old missionary had visited this celebrated city, and he avails himself of the opportunity of strengthening and encouraging the church which he had partially organized during his previous visit a few months before. The ship in which they had embarked remained here "seven days," and the missionaries doubtless made diligent use of this short time. On Sabbath the little company of disciples met in an "upper chamber" to celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and to hear the gospel from the mouth of the great preacher. Knowing that he must leave them

on the morrow, both preacher and people were so deeply interested that they not only spent the greater part of the day in religious worship, but prolonged the services until "midnight." Luke, as an eye-witness, minutely describes the appearance of the room in which the congregation assembled, as it was indelibly photographed upon his memory by the scenes witnessed that night. The upper chamber was commonly the chief room in ancient houses, and was used as a reception-room or guest-chamber; and on this occasion it was doubtless furnished by some disciple for the accommodation of his friends, where they might not only hear the gospel preached, but might spend awhile in social intercourse with the apostle. The room was crowded, and seats being difficult to obtain some of the audience sat in the open windows. As the night wore on one young man fell asleep, and, losing his balance, fell from the third story of the building to the ground below, and was instantly killed. As the crowd gathered around the lifeless form, giving vent to loud lamentations,

Paul made his appearance, and falling upon the body, like Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 21) and Elisha of old (2 Kings iv. 34), restored him to life by miraculous power. The young man being thus restored, the company re-assemble in the guest-chamber and engage in friendly conversation with the apostle until "break of day." Then, partaking of an early breakfast, he and his companions prepare to go aboard the ship, which was now about to sail; but at the earnest solicitation of his friends, perhaps, he changes his mind at the last moment and determines to remain a few hours longer, which he can do by going afoot to Assos, some twenty miles distant, where he will again meet the ship. While his companions, therefore, are sailing around Cape Lectum he improves the fleeting moments by giving needed counsel and admonition to his new converts under circumstances well calculated to make a deep impression upon them; and then bidding them an affectionate farewell, he hurries onward through oak woods and by the side of crystal streams on that memorable Sunday

afternoon in the merry spring-time, with a heart cheered and strengthened by this peaceful communion with nature and nature's God. Finding the ship already at anchor, he immediately went aboard upon his arrival at Assos, and the voyage was continued southward past several interesting towns, until at the end of three days they had reached Miletus, a town some twenty or thirty miles from Ephesus. Being very anxious to reach Jerusalem in season for the Feast of Pentecost, Paul could not spare the time to make a visit to the scene of his long and eventful labors; but equally anxious to learn the condition of the church and to give it some farewell admonitions and counsels, he had taken the precaution at a favorable place of sending a message to the elders of the church to meet him at Miletus, so that while the sailors were loading and unloading their wares he might occupy the time in speaking to his brethren in regard to the high and holy mysteries of redemption.

CHAPTER XXVII.

PAUL'S ADDRESS TO THE EPHESIAN ELDERS.

THE polity of the early Christian Church was fashioned after that which had characterized the synagogue from time immemorial, and every congregation had a bench of elders who were chosen by the members to bear rule and administer government in the church. These officers were called in the Greek language "presbyters." These representatives and office-bearers of the Ephesian church were the men for whom Paul had previously sent, and being anxious and eager to see their beloved pastor they gladly and quickly obey the summons to meet him. The short distance of thirty miles was soon traveled, so that they reached Miletus almost as soon as the apostle himself. Having exchanged mutual greetings, the earnest missionary calls them aside to some secluded spot near the seashore, and delivers to them his farewell mes-

sage of comfort, counsel, admonition, and encouragement.

Four years before this he had begun his labors among them in the little province of Asia, on the west coast of Asia Minor, and for nearly three of those years he had been their pastor, so that they were well acquainted with him. He refers to his past life among them, and calls upon them to attest his fidelity, not in a spirit of personal pride, but out of regard to his apostolic authority, which had been so severely assailed in Corinth and elsewhere. Paul nowhere shows any desire to be a "lord over God's heritage," but he everywhere gives evidence of his humility. He scorned no opportunity for doing good, no matter how insignificant it might appear, nor did he hesitate to engage in manual labor whenever it became necessary for the success of the gospel. His sojourn in Ephesus was characterized by an intense earnestness which wrung tears from his eyes as he contemplated the condition of his unconverted fellow-men. Having thus appealed to his friends to attest the purity of his

character and the fidelity of his conduct, he proceeds to set forth the method of his work. Again calling upon them for confirmation, he declares that neither fear of persecution nor desire of popularity had ever induced him to preach a mutilated gospel; but on the contrary, studying well the character and condition of his people, whatever truth he thought applicable and profitable to them that he had presented in public—as when he preached in the “school of Tyrannus”—and by personal appeals in private. He “shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God,” thus bearing faithful testimony to the truth; and this he did to all classes and conditions of humanity without exception, realizing that all were alike sinners, and in equal need of salvation. But wherever he went the substance of his teaching was always the same, and the burden of every sermon was the two fundamental doctrines of repentance and faith—the two together constituting the sum of Christian doctrine and of practical religion. Having thus briefly reviewed the past, the grand old hero

turns to consider the future, and declares to his friends the sense of duty under which he leaves them. He asserts his ignorance of the future as to its details, but he knew in general that it was filled with trials and afflictions. Yet so strong were his convictions of duty that he never wavered even for a moment in his heroic purpose. His life was of no value to him except to accomplish the work which his Lord had given him to do, and he was willing to die if need be, or to live amidst trials and afflictions, if thereby he might complete his allotted work. He had been "made an apostle by the Lord," and his object in life was to please him and to publish to his fellow-men the "good news" of God's favor and forgiving love. The figure of a race, which he uses in this address, seems to have been a favorite one with him (Phil. iii. 13, 14, Heb. xii. 1, 1 Cor. ix. 24-26), and some eight years later we find him using the same figure again almost with his dying-breath, as the language of triumph and success breaks from his exultant lips (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8). Having thus declared his invincible

purpose to follow the path of duty regardless of results, he makes known to his friends that he is now about to bid them a final farewell, and with thrilling emotion and in the strongest language he not only affirms his fidelity, but challenges them to refute his testimony if they can, and if not to confirm it on this the last day of their meeting upon earth. His language is borrowed from the crime of murder and the manner in which it is often detected, and calls to mind the words of the prophet (Ezek. iii. 17-21) in regard to the responsibility of the gospel herald, which he doubtless had in view when he spoke. Nothing could induce him to keep back any thing essential to God's honor or man's salvation, and he claims exemption from all responsibility in the death of those who heard him preach. Having thus given a leaf from his own life-history as an example for these Ephesian elders, their beloved pastor assures them that his work among them is done, and he rolls the burden of responsibility and care of the church off upon them. As a prerequisite to

successful management of such spiritual interests he exhorts them first of all to take heed to themselves, that they may be both sound in doctrine and blameless in life, for thus only could they be prepared to take the spiritual oversight of others. But responsibility does not cease with such personal preparation, for as church officials they must also "take heed to the flock," not merely to a few who are congenial and attractive, or rich and within easy reach, but to "all"—absolutely every member of the church, and to the poor and weak ones especially. The first reason assigned by the apostle for their doing this is the fact that they had been called to this responsible position by the Holy Ghost, and thus made "overseers" of the church. The Greek word here translated "overseers" (Acts xx. 28) is everywhere else in the New Testament rendered "bishops," and as these same men had only a few minutes before been addressed as *πρεσβυτεροι*, or "elders" (Acts xx. 17), it is evident that the words thus used interchangeably by both Luke (Acts xx. 17-28) and Paul (Titus i.

5-7) designate the same class of officers, the former term perhaps denoting the duties of the office, while the latter denotes its rank. The great argument enforcing the faithful discharge of duty to the church on the part of these officers is the fact that the Holy Ghost had awakened in their own hearts the desire to assume such solemn obligations, and had guided and governed the suffrages of the congregation in their election (Acts vi. 5, xiii. 2, 1 Cor. xii. 8). But he had placed them over the flock not so much to exercise authority as to "shepherd" it, so that their duty was to guide, guard, feed, and act the part of a shepherd in every particular. The second reason enforcing their duty to the church is the fact that it is the especial object of the divine affection for the purchase of which he gave his own life. This strong language of the apostle is incontrovertible evidence of the divinity of Christ. He was "the good shepherd who gave his life for the sheep," for Paul's metaphor of the flock is borrowed from our Lord (John x. 1-16), and by him from the Old Tes-

tament (Ps. xxiii., Isa. lxiii. 11, Jer. xxxi. 10, Micah vii. 14). The third reason assigned by the departing pastor why his injunction should be obeyed by the session of the church is drawn from the danger which he foresaw threatening it. His long sojourn in Asia had made him familiar with the character of the church's enemies, and his keen insight enabled him to detect their secret motives and to discover the germs of apostasy which were developed in after years, as attested by the apostle's letters to Timothy, who was then living in the vicinity of Ephesus (1 Tim. i. 20, 2 Tim. vii. 15, ii. 17, iv. 14). According to Schaff, "the church of Ephesus, singularly enough, became notorious in after days as a famous seat of the great and wide-spread Gnostic heresy. Even in the New Testament writings no fewer than six of the pioneers of these fatal teachers of error are mentioned as belonging to Ephesus." Against such false teachers—"wolves in sheep's clothing"—the apostle here warns the elders of the Ephesian church; and he assures them that these advo-

cates of error would be of two classes—the one coming from a distance, the other originating within the church itself. In view of the danger thus arising, Paul echoes the language of the Master (Matt. xxiv. 42, xxv. 32), and as a motive for their heeding the admonition he pleads his own manner of life with which they had been familiar for three long years. Having thus delivered to them this solemn charge and indicated their duty in the future, he affectionately commends them to his heavenly Father and to the gracious influences of the gospel, which in the hands of the Spirit are the means for building Christians up in the most holy faith and preparing them for their “inheritance among the sanctified.” This figure of an “inheritance” is a favorite one with the apostle, perhaps because it indicates the gratuitous nature of the believer’s possession, for the idea of an inheritance excludes that of merit. Once more the grand old missionary refers to his past life among them, and challenges his former colleagues in office to show that he had ever been actuated

by worldly considerations in his labors among them. Then, as now, covetousness was the monster sin of the Church (1 Tim. vi. 7-11). But Paul was free from it. The object of his labors was not silver, but souls. Instead of coveting the possessions of others, in the exercise of a noble independence he had provided for his own support and that of his friends who were engaged with him in preaching the gospel, especially those who were themselves unable to undertake manual labor, as was perhaps the case with Timothy (1 Tim. v. 23), who seems to have been quite delicate. Paul was no doubt a skillful workman, and could easily defray his expenses at his occupation of tent-making; but he elsewhere claims his right to a support from the churches he served (1 Cor. ix. 11-15, 2 Cor. xi. 7-12, xii. 13-16). Holding out his hands, which still bore the marks of toil, he calls upon the Ephesian elders to imitate his example in providing for their needy brethren; and as an incentive thereto he quotes an unrecorded proverb handed down by tradition from Christ: "It is

more blessed to give than to receive." This language is not found in any of the Gospels, but belongs most probably to our Lord's oral teachings, and bears significant testimony to the wide extent to which his words were diffused. The principle involved in this proverb was strikingly illustrated in the life of both Paul and the Master. Having delivered this charge to the Ephesian elders, and intrusted his beloved church to their care, the apostle concludes this interesting conference by kneeling with his friends upon the white sands of the beach, and pouring out his soul in an earnest prayer for God's blessing upon them and their labors. Luke shrinks from the attempt to record the words of this prayer, but its substance perhaps may be gathered from Ephesians iii. 14-21. At the conclusion of these solemn devotions the elders, with streaming eyes and throbbing hearts, bade their beloved pastor an affectionate and affecting farewell, accompanying him to the ship, which was now ready to sail, and watching him as long as the power of vision could discern his form upon the deck.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

The minister should so live that he can confidently challenge the criticism of his people.

The Lord should be served with "humility of mind."

The minister should "keep back" from the people "nothing that is profitable to them."

The minister should preach "from house to house" as well as "publicly" from the pulpit.

Personal preaching is usually profitable preaching.

"A house-going preacher makes a church-going people."

Preaching is simply "bearing testimony" to the truth.

"Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," presents a summary of Christian doctrine and practical religion.

Self-vigilance and care is one of the first and most important duties of the public teacher.

The elder should "take heed to all the flock."

The elder's position is one of great responsibility, because he is called thereto by the Holy Ghost.

It is the duty of the elder to faithfully "shepherd the Church of God."

The Church is an object of great interest to God, because he has "purchased it with his own blood."

The divinity of Christ is an incontrovertible fact.

The Church is exposed to dangers from enemies within and enemies without.

False teachers are a source of great injury to the Church.

Vigilance is essential to safety, both for the individual and the Church.

The gospel in the hands of the Spirit is the means for the edification and sanctification of the Church.

Christians should help each other.

"Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"HOMEWARD BOUND."

AS the Ephesian elders proceed on their way homeward, discussing the life and labors of their beloved pastor among them, and stimulating each other to a faithful discharge of the duties he had just enjoined upon them, the ship with the missionary party on board skims swiftly over the smooth surface of the sea, and ere the shadows of night begin to gather over the earth reaches the harbor of a small island some forty miles south of Miletus. It was celebrated for its wines and as the birthplace of Hippocrates, called "the father of medicine." It also possessed a medical school traditionally connected with Esculapius, the pagan god of physicians, and was therefore doubtless of special interest to Luke, the "beloved physician." In this harbor the ship lay at anchor overnight, and the next morning again started on its course, reaching Rhodes before night-fall, another isl-

and some fifty miles south of Coos. It was celebrated for its unrivaled situation, its remarkable fertility, and as the site of the Colossus, the chief, perhaps, of "the seven wonders of the world." The next morning the ship again sets sail and soon reaches Patara, a sea-port of Lycia, near the mouth of the river Xanthus, celebrated for its temple and oracle of Apollo. Here the vessel either finished its voyage or else was going in a direction different from that which the missionary party desired; so they left it, and providentially found another ship just on the point of sailing for Phenicia. This was the country on the coast of the Levant, north of Palestine, to which belonged the celebrated cities of Tyre and Sidon. The first of these was the point where the ship was to unload its cargo, and was distant from Patara, the starting-point, some three hundred and fifty miles, but the wind was so favorable that the voyage was soon made.

So many prophecies cluster around Tyre that the name is familiar to every Bible-read-

er. At this time it was neither characterized by that prosperity described by the prophets (Isa. xxxiii., Ezek. xxvi. and xxvii.) nor by that dreary desolation by which it is marked to-day (Ezek. xxvi. 14). Some days would necessarily be required for unloading the ship, and these Paul improve to the best possible advantage. As soon as he landed he began to inquire for the church which his own mad persecution of the early Christians had perhaps been instrumental in founding (Acts xi. 19), and which he had probably visited upon a former occasion as he went up to attend the council at Jerusalem (Acts xv. 3). With this church the missionaries are now permitted to spend "seven days," and while thus engaged in preaching to the people the Spirit reveals to them the dangers which awaited the apostle, and they, concluding on that account that he ought not to go to Jerusalem, attempt to dissuade him from his purpose. But he, more capable of interpreting the divine will, persevered in his determination and prepared to resume his journey as soon as the ship was

ready to sail. Finding that they cannot alter Paul's purpose, the whole church, including men, women, and children, accompany the missionaries to the ship as an expression of their high regard, and reluctant no doubt to give them up. In some retired spot along the beach the little company halt, and kneeling down upon the white sand unite in earnest prayer for the divine guidance and blessing. Having done this and bidden each other an affectionate farewell, the Tyrian Christians return to their homes, while the missionary party re-enter the ship and are soon at Ptolemais, some thirty miles south of Tyre. This was one of the oldest cities of the world, which derived its name from one of the kings of Egypt, and was the terminus of the apostle's voyage at this time. Leaving the ship at this point, he proceeds on his journey by land, after having stopped long enough to salute and encourage the church, which had been previously established by some agency now unknown to the world. The voyage had been remarkably favorable, but the apostle still

seems anxious lest he might fail to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost, and he hurries on to Cesarea, about thirty miles distant. This was the chief Roman city of Palestine on the Mediterranean, some forty or fifty miles from Jerusalem. It was built by Herod Agrippa, and named in honor of Augustus Cæsar. Here the missionaries find a Christian church, of which Philip was the pastor perhaps. The inspired historian carefully distinguishes him from Philip the apostle. He was one of the seven deacons chosen by the primitive Church (Acts vi. 5), and, like Stephen, afterward became an eminent preacher of the gospel, carrying the "good news" from place to place as indicated by the term "evangelist." Nearly a quarter of a century before this he had preached in Samaria and other cities. Worn out at last by long journeys and continued labors, he gave up his evangelistic work perhaps, and was now in his old age quietly settled as pastor of the Cesarean church. In the house of this godly man Paul and his companions find a pleasant home and quiet resting-

place after their long journey. This visit was of especial interest to Luke, who doubtless gathered much information from Philip in regard to the early history of the Church, and the little company of travelers linger at Cæsarea beyond their first expectations, finding the family of the "evangelist" exceedingly interesting and attractive as well as greatly honored of God. His four daughters were all endowed with the gift of prophecy; but whether they taught in public promiscuous assemblies cannot be asserted, for the term "prophecy" is doubtless used in its general sense of "teaching." As these pioneer preachers thus linger in holy communication one with another, an eminent prophet, whose name has already appeared upon the pages of Luke's history (Acts xi. 28), makes his appearance at Cæsarea. To him the Spirit had also revealed the dangers which lurked in the pathway of Paul, and he perhaps comes down from Jerusalem on purpose to warn him against going there. This warning he gives in a very dramatic and impressive way by means of a symbolic act

analogous to the methods employed by the Old Testament prophets (1 Kings xxii. 11, Isa. xx. 23, Jer. xiii. 1, Ezek. v. 1, xiv. 1). In the East the girdle was an essential article of dress, used to bind the loose, flowing robes around the waist, and consequently was necessary to free, active movement, so that it became an emblem of energetic action; and hence this dramatic prophecy of Agabus strikingly set forth the apostle's approaching captivity. Realizing more fully than ever that their beloved leader was exposed to danger, his companions and friends make an earnest and united effort to prevent his going to Jerusalem; but although his sensitive nature was much affected by their tears and entreaties, his heroic purpose was unshaken. Knowing full well that it was his duty to continue his journey, regardless of the difficulties and dangers that might be in the way, he declares to them his unalterable determination; and at last, convinced that such was God's will concerning his servant, his friends cease their efforts to detain him, and the grand old hero again starts forth toward

Jerusalem. The missionary party had lingered longer in Cesarea than they had at first intended in order perhaps that Luke in his intercourse with Philip might gain materials for his history in regard to the early days of the Church, but more especially no doubt to rest and refresh themselves, finding that they had ample time to complete their journey before Pentecost. Jerusalem was on high ground, some two days' journey from Cesarea. At this time travelers from every direction were pouring into the Jewish metropolis to be present at the approaching feast. Among others were Jewish Christians from Cesarea, who accompanied the missionaries as pleasant companions and also perhaps as a sort of body-guard to shield the apostle from the dangers which they felt sure awaited him, having previously arranged for him to lodge with a well-known disciple who had long been a Christian.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

God uses commerce and the work which men carry on for their own interests as the means for the spread of the gospel.

Wherever Christians go they should seek out and identify themselves with the Church.

Children have ever constituted a part of the Church.

God has given to the Church "evangelists" as well as "pastors and teachers."

Duty and danger often lie along the same pathway.

No danger should deter from the discharge of duty.

The will of God should be the law of every life.

CHAPTER XXIX.

PAUL AT JERUSALEM.

AT last the memorable journey, so full of incident, is completed, and for the fifth time (Acts ix. 26, xi. 30, xv. 2-4, xviii. 22) since his departure from Jerusalem, on his bloody mission to Damascus, the apostle enters the Jewish metropolis after long, weary months of labor and trial in the service of his Master. As his feet again rest upon that sacred soil each familiar scene doubtless sends a thrill of joy through his heart, intermingled with feelings of sorrowful regret, as he calls to mind his career as persecutor, while his presence in their midst awakens emotions of delight in the breasts of the Christian brotherhood. There were in all probability Christians from all parts of the world in attendance upon the feast, all of whom had heard of Paul, many of whom had heard him preach and knew him personally, so that he received a

warm welcome and a cordial reception from these brethren in the Lord. The next day a formal meeting of the church session was arranged, at which the missionaries were to be present to give an account of their labors, and to turn over the funds contributed by the Gentile churches for the benefit of their needy brethren at Jerusalem. James, the "brother of our Lord," and author of the Epistle bearing his name, was still pastor of the church. Calling together his board of elders, they awaited the coming of Paul and his associates, who represented the contributing Gentile churches. These men had been appointed by their several churches to take charge of their contributions, and it had been done at the apostle's request in order to forestall even the possibility of a charge of misappropriation being brought against him. When the assembly had convened, Paul, after turning over the funds to the deacons of the church, proceeded to give a detailed account of his labors among the Gentiles during the years that had elapsed since his last visit to Jerusalem. In that time

he had established several large churches, had been instrumental in the conversion of multitudes to Christianity, had taken up collections for the benefit of his Jewish brethren, and had wrought miracles in attestation of his divine commission to preach the gospel—enough, surely, to fill the pious soul with emotions of joy—and when his address was finished the church united in a service of praise and thanksgiving to God, to whom alone Paul had given the credit of his success. But although the majority of the church thus rejoiced in the apostle's success among the Gentiles, there were still some who regarded all his movements with uncompromising jealousy because he undervalued, as they supposed, their time-honored laws and ceremonies. The Pharisaic elements, which had years before interfered with his labors at Antioch (Acts xv. 1, 2), and which had sought to poison the minds of his converts at Corinth and among the Galatians, were still present in the churches of Judea. But in addition to these sectarian zealots, who were more concerned about the

observance of the Mosaic ritual than about the salvation of their fellow-men, there were many weak and imperfect Christians whose minds were as yet in a state of transition between the rigorous requirements of the law and the merciful provisions of the gospel. At the descent of the Holy Spirit, twenty-five years before this, there were added to the Church in one day "three thousand" new members, and shortly after the number was swelled to "five thousand," which was still further increased from time to time, until now the church of Judea was very large, many of whose members were far more familiar with the rites of Judaism than with the tenets of Christianity. Many of these were now gathered in Jerusalem to attend the feast, and misapprehending the teachings of Paul, they became enraged against him. The charge they brought was false, for he had never taught the Jews to forsake the customs of their fathers, but on the contrary had himself conformed to them upon more than one occasion. What he taught was that the observance of no mere ordinance or

rite, however important it might be, could secure salvation (Gal. v. 6, vi. 15), and therefore it was not necessary for the Gentiles to observe the Mosaic ritual (1 Cor. vii. 18, 19). This teaching was no doubt willfully perverted by his enemies, and his position accordingly misrepresented to these Jewish Christians; for it seems from Luke's language that they had been carefully drilled in regard to it. The Greek verb literally means to "catechise," thereby indicating that designing parties had been diligently instilling these misrepresentations into the minds of the people. These Jewish Christians were perhaps excusable for clinging to their former customs, for they had been divinely appointed. In observing them they imitated the example of the apostle (Acts iii. 1), and the question of their observance had never been debated in the Church, the decision of the Jerusalem council applying only to the Gentile converts (Acts xv. 1-29). They were allowed thus to continue because the discussion of the question would have split the Church into factions, but more especially

because God himself was about to furnish an argument in the destruction of Jerusalem that would forever abolish the observance of the Mosaic ritual, and thus effectually stop the debate. Under such misapprehensions and misrepresentations it was but natural that many of the Jewish Christians should be hostile to Paul; and although well aware that he must encounter such hostility if he enters Jerusalem, the old hero never for one moment swerves from his purpose—ready to face not only persecution, but death, in the pathway of duty.

Well knowing the bitter feelings cherished against the apostle by many of his brethren, James seeks to avert any exhibition of their indignation by suggesting to Paul a course of conciliation. Knowing that his arrival could not be kept secret, and that his appearance upon the streets would bring the excited multitude together, perhaps with mob violence, the pastor proposes a plan which had been previously agreed upon by himself and the session. It was not uncommon for outside parties to share the expenses of the offerings of those

bound by Nazaritic vows, and thus indirectly become partakers of the benefits supposed to be derived from the vow. The plan proposed to Paul was that he should bear the expenses, which were considerable (Num. vi. 14-18), and identify himself with "four men" who had taken such a vow. Thus he would prove his love for the old Jewish customs and at the same time manifest his own generosity and self-denial, as it was generally known that he supported himself by his own labor. The course recommended would involve no compromise of principle, since the decision of the Jerusalem council applied only to the Gentiles. To gratify his friends the apostle willingly enters into the plan proposed, and the next day goes with the Nazarites to the priests to inform them that the time of the vow had expired and to arrange for the offering of the sacrifices. This public acknowledgment of his allegiance to Jewish law doubtless had the desired effect of conciliating the large majority of the church who were hostile to the apostle only because they believed him to be hos-

tile to their national worship; but it failed utterly so far as their unconverted brethren were concerned. Even while he was in the temple engaged in performing the prescribed ceremonies he was rudely torn from his sacred surroundings, with the tokens of his purification still upon him. He was recognized by certain Jews who had come from Ephesus to attend the Feast of Pentecost; and seeing their well-known adversary in the temple engaged in such ritualistic acts, they were at first amazed, and then, giving way to their long continued hatred, they laid violent hands upon him. It was but natural that these Asiatic Jews, who had long been irritated by the apostle's success in Ephesus, and who had just come from a heated controversy with him, should be the leaders in this attack upon their old enemy. Availing themselves of this opportunity for revenge, they seek to excite their Jewish brethren to deeds of violence by malicious misrepresentations of their prisoner. Their accusations were wholly false. Paul had never taught the Jews to disparage or disregard the

customs of their fathers, nor had he brought Gentiles into the temple. Their accusation was in both respects based upon mere inferences of their own. He had taught the Gentiles that it was not necessary for them to observe Jewish ceremonies, and his enemies inferred that he thereby taught against the Jewish people. His friend and companion, Trophimus, had accompanied him from Ephesus in charge of the contribution of that church, and as soon as they see this old Ephesian neighbor, with whom they were doubtless well acquainted, in company with the apostle, they infer that he had violated the law by bringing him into the temple. They do not even pretend that they had seen him there; but the mere supposition that Paul had taken him there was enough to excite the prejudices and passions of the Jews, and with violent hands they drag him from the temple, and were only deterred from killing him on the spot by their reverence for the house of God. No sooner is the excited crowd outside the gates than the temple guards hurriedly close

them in order to keep the sanctuary from being desecrated, and also perhaps to prevent the prisoner from fleeing to the altar for refuge; for no human blood must be shed within the temple (2 Kings xi. 15). Having dragged their prisoner beyond the sacred precincts of the temple, the infuriated mob were about to stain their hands with his blood when the Roman authorities interposed in his behalf. The sentries on the watch-towers soon saw the commotion in the temple court, and hurriedly sent a message to the chief captain of the garrison. The name of this officer was Claudius Lysias (Acts xxiii. 26), and his official rank answered to that of colonel, or perhaps brigadier-general, in the United States army. His official title among the Romans was "tribune," and he commanded the Roman forces now stationed in the fortress of Antonia, which overlooked the temple and its courts. No sooner does Lysias learn of the riot than he hastens to the scene of the disorder with a strong body of soldiers, and by his prompt action thwarts the murderous purpose of the mob. The

sight of the imperial soldiers and the fear of the rigorous Roman law soon quelled the tumult. Not waiting to inquire into the nature of Paul's offense, the officer acts upon the supposition that he is guilty of some great crime, and orders him to be bound to two soldiers, thus strikingly fulfilling the prophecy of Agabus (Acts xxi. 11). Having secured the prisoner, the officer demands the cause of such violence on the part of the mob, but as usual in such cases they could give no satisfactory account of the riot, the greater part of the crowd perhaps being entirely ignorant of its origin. Finding that he can learn nothing from the mob, he orders the prisoner to be carried into the barracks within the fortress. Disappointed, and fearing that their victim will escape them, the angry mob try to tear him from the guard, and in their mad effort to do so press so closely upon them that Paul is actually carried up the stairs by the violent pressure of the crowd, which gives continual utterance to the same wild cry that had echoed through this same city more than a quar-

ter of a century before (Luke xxiii. 18, John xix. 15). Rising above the excitement of the multitude, the prisoner remains calm and self-possessed, and capable of determining the best course to pursue. Adopting a bold plan as the best one, he turns to the officer in command, and addressing him in the Greek language, asks with dignity and composure for a private interview. Astonished to hear the prisoner speak the language of culture and refinement, Lysias at once changes his opinion in regard to him. He had supposed that Paul belonged to the low, brutish crowd, and was perhaps a well-known Egyptian rebel and leader of a famous band of assassins and brigands. To the officer's question as to his nationality the apostle declares that he is a Jew and a native of cultured Tarsus, which had been highly favored by the Romans and made a free city by Augustus. Having thus gained the attention and respect of Lysias, Paul makes another bold request; and obtaining permission to address the excited mob from which he had just been rescued, he at once

avails himself of the opportunity. Something in his manner gained an influence over the Roman officer, and as he stood up to speak this same indefinable something awed the noisy multitude into silence. Instantly every tongue was hushed, and as the well-known words of their native dialect fell upon the ears of the fanatics it soothed their passions and allayed their prejudices. The speaker's object was to correct the mistaken ideas they had formed in regard to him, but not so much to vindicate himself perhaps as to use the opportunity for preaching the gospel to his deluded countrymen. In order to obtain a favorable hearing he at once claims a relationship with them and addresses them in the familiar Hebrew language so fondly cherished by every Jew. Having thus enlisted their sympathies, he seeks still further to conciliate by giving them an account of his life, which prior to his conversion was but the counterpart of their own at the present time. He tells them that he is a Jew both by birth and education, gives them an account of his school-life in Jerusa-

lem under Gamaliel, makes known his zeal for the customs of his fathers as he cruelly persecuted the disciples of Christ, and finally narrates the remarkable story of his conversion to Christianity. He then tells them that in accordance with his Jewish sentiments he goes up to Jerusalem and prays in the temple, and while doing so the voice of God bids him leave the sacred city and preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Up to this point the mob listened with rapt attention, but as soon as he mentioned his commission to preach to the hated Gentiles their prejudices were again aroused. Such a reference never failed to excite the anger of the Jews, for it came directly in conflict with their cherished idea that the Messiah was exclusively for the chosen nation; so when Paul intimated the contrary the mob became furious again, and would doubtless have murdered him had he not been beyond their reach. Not being sufficiently well acquainted with the Hebrew language to understand Paul's speech, the Roman officer concluded from the conduct of the people that the pris-

oner must certainly be guilty of some great crime, and ordered him to be brought into the castle and scourged in order to make him confess his guilt. In a Roman barrack, surrounded by rude soldiers, stripped of his clothing, and bound ready to receive the cruel scourging, Paul nevertheless retains his self-possession, and in a calm, steady voice, asks the centurion who had him in charge if it was right to subject an uncondemned Roman citizen to such treatment. Immediately the centurion reports the matter to his superior officer, and Lysias, filled with surprise and trepidation, hastens to inquire of Paul whether or not the officer's report be true. To his astonishment he finds that the prisoner has a far more honorable claim to Roman citizenship than himself. Instantly the instruments of torture are removed, and the prisoner is shown unusual consideration as a kind of atonement for the indignity he had just received; for the chief captain was filled with alarm, as he had already violated the law by binding a Roman. He was still obliged to keep the pris-

oner in custody, since he knew not the nature of his offense, and also as the best means of preventing his murder by the maddened mob. But on the following day he adopts milder measures for learning the facts in regard to the riot, and with this object in view, he calls together the Sanhedrim, or supreme court of the Jewish nation. Before this body, sitting in the same hall and composed of some of the same members which tried and condemned the martyr Stephen some twenty years before, when Paul himself was a member of the court, he is now brought as a prisoner. Many of the faces are doubtless familiar to him as he looks around over the assembly, whose presence he enters with his mind filled with conflicting emotions as he contrasts the present with the past. When last he entered this hall he cherished all the bitter feelings of persecution which now characterize the judges before whom he is arraigned. Conscious of his own innocence, and glad that he is thus able in some measure to atone for the guilty part he took in the death of Stephen, he is perfectly

calm and self-possessed, and he is able to study carefully the countenances of those before him. Some of his judges were doubtless his fellow-pupils in the school of Gamaliel, while others were his companions and abettors in those dark days when he persecuted the Church; and he gazes searchingly into their faces for the purpose of reading, if possible, their characters and feelings. Having satisfied himself with this study of his audience, the apostle with the utmost dignity and self-respect proceeds to assert his innocence. Instead of being an apostate Jew and teaching others to disregard the Jewish laws and ceremonies, as he was accused, he declares that his life had been characterized by the strictest loyalty to the religion of his fathers; for what he had done and taught as a Christian was not contrary to, but was in reality the carrying out of, the true import and design of the Jewish economy. Enraged at the mere idea of the prisoner, who was notoriously regarded as an apostate, thus presuming to make such an assertion in the presence of his judges, the pre-

siding officer commands him to be silenced by an act at once humiliating and symbolical; for according to Eastern ideas to "smite one on the mouth" indicated that it had been used unlawfully, and must in the future be kept closed. The man who gave this unjust command had been appointed to the high and sacred office of high-priest by Herod A.D. 48. He was notorious for his violent and illegal acts, so that his conduct upon this occasion was only in strict keeping with his general character. Stung by the cruel injustice of such treatment, the apostle for the moment loses his self-control and indignantly replies, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall," referring to the walls of the sepulchers, which the Jews kept conspicuously whitewashed lest some one might inadvertently come in contact with them and be defiled. Without they were white and attractive, but within they were loathsome and disgusting, and were a fit emblem of the hypocrite (Matt. xxiii. 27, Luke xi. 44). Paul's language was not an imprecation, but a prophecy, which was fulfilled a few

years later, when Ananias fell a victim to the daggers of the assassins. In giving such a command the high-priest had violated the law which required careful investigation and gave the accused the right to speak in his own defense (Lev. xix. 35, Deut. xix. 17, 18, xxv. 1), and the prisoner boldly challenges his conduct. Struck with the apparent impiety of Paul's reply, the court remonstrate. To treat the high-priest with disrespect was both illegal and irreverent, and well aware of the fact, the apostle willingly offers an apology as soon as he learns who gave the command. It is highly probable that he had not seen from whom the command came, which is a very natural supposition if he was near-sighted, as many suppose. Others are of the opinion that the apostle refused to recognize Ananias as high-priest, since he held the sacred office only by Roman appointment, and not by hereditary right. The Sanhedrim was composed of members of each of the two Jewish factions so long and so violently opposed to each other, and the apostle with great skill avails himself

of their well-known opposition to secure in his behalf the sympathy and support of at least one-half of his judges. He was by birth and education a Pharisee; and identifying himself with that prominent sect, famous for their strict adherence to the Mosaic ritual, he at once enlists their sympathies, especially as the very matter of which he was accused was the one at issue between the opposing parties. The fact, too, that Ananias was a Sadducee, and that he had been guilty of manifest injustice toward the prisoner, doubtless still further excited the Pharisees, who now willingly and warmly espoused the cause of the apostle. Paul's reference to the resurrection aroused all the long-cherished animosity between the rival sects, and they became so infuriated against each other that they almost lost sight of the prisoner. The Sadducees, finding that they cannot convict him by formal trial, attempt to kill him on the spot; while the Pharisees, for the moment more angry with their old adversaries than with the apostle, seek to save his life; so that between the two he is

in imminent peril, but is soon rescued by the timely interposition of the Roman guard, and returned to the castle for safety. That night, as he lies upon his rough couch in the barrack, thinking of his perilous surroundings, his Master appears to him in a quiet conference that stands out in striking contrast with the clamorous scenes of the day. He doubtless suffered from a reaction after two days of such intense excitement, was still in the power of his enemies, and was most probably disappointed at the result of his labors in Jerusalem; so that this appearance of his Lord in person, with assurances of safety and the realization of his long-cherished desire to visit Rome, was exceedingly comforting and refreshing to the weary sufferer not only at this time, but also amidst the difficulties and dangers by which he was afterward surrounded. But while he was enjoying this welcome message from his Master his disappointed enemies were busy plotting how they might get him into their power again, that they might put him to death. The greater part of the night

was doubtless spent in discussing various plans, and not until near break of day did they reach a satisfactory conclusion. "More than forty" of them entered into a conspiracy and bound themselves under a solemn oath to take the prisoner's life. These men were probably some of the apostle's bitterest enemies from Asia Minor, who first instigated the riot, but they were soon joined by members of a fanatical association known as "assassins," which was terribly conspicuous during the last days of Jerusalem. To insure the carrying out of the plot they pledged themselves to take no kind of food until their intended victim had been put to death. Thus shut up to the necessity of speedy and determined action, their fiendish purposes would doubtless have been carried out had they not been thwarted by the providence of God. That so many persons should enter into such a conspiracy, and without scruple propose it to the supreme court of the nation, seems almost incredible; but it well accords with the Jewish opinions and practices of that age. Well knowing that the dis-

appointed Sadducees would sympathize with them in their efforts to destroy the hated prisoner, they hasten to them and propose their plan, which was very skillfully arranged, and was probably suggested by some shrewd member of the Sanhedrim. It relieved the court of all responsibility in the matter in case of investigation, and at the same time accomplished the purpose which both court and conspirators had in view. The request for a second trial was natural and apparently necessary, since that on the previous day had been interrupted by the angry clamor among the judges themselves. The plan was to murder the prisoner on the way to the judgment hall, and then represent it as the result of an accidental tumult, while the Sanhedrim would exert itself to appease the Roman authorities. Thus every conceivable difficulty was carefully met and provided for, so that Paul's death seemed certain. But the wisdom of God, with a wider sweep and a broader vision, was able easily to frustrate the whole plan. The Sadducees were perhaps the most active in arrang-

ing this plot, but the Pharisees soon recovered from their momentary interest in the prisoner, and doubtless entered willingly into the proposed plan; at least, they were associated with the Sadducees when they came to make their accusation before the Roman governor a few days later (Acts xxiv. 15). The number of conspirators being so large, it was next to impossible to keep their murderous purpose secret, and among others who found it out was the prisoner's nephew, who immediately imparted the information to his uncle. This is the only direct reference that the Bible makes to Paul's family, but whether his sister resided in Jerusalem, or whether her son was simply there at school or on a visit, is not known. He was perhaps only a lad, possibly a Christian; at any rate not a bigoted Jew, or he would have allowed the supposed claims of his religion to override and destroy the instincts of blood relationship. Learning of this new peril, Paul neglects no proper means of safety, notwithstanding the assurance of security he had received from Christ, thus proving that he

was no fanatic, and at the same time teaching us that while we rely upon God to do his part we must also perform ours. Acting upon this principle he calls the officer in charge of the military guard by which he was held in custody, and asks that his nephew be taken to the chief captain for a private interview. The fact that the prisoner was known to be a Roman citizen caused the soldiers to treat him with respect, and gained for him a ready response to his request. This fact, or something in Paul's personal bearing, exerted a great influence over Lysias, so that he was as ready to comply with the request as was the centurion. Constrained by a disposition naturally kind, or by the evident embarrassment of the youth, the noble officer speaks to him in an encouraging tone, and leads him to a place where his secret will not be overheard by others. Thus encouraged and secured, the young man makes known the conspiracy against the prisoner; and while the enraged Jews are impatiently waiting to carry out their carefully prepared scheme, God provides a way of escape for his

faithful servant. The tribune was doubtless greatly astonished to learn of the conspiracy, and dismissing his informant with a necessary caution he proceeds at once to take steps to overthrow it. Well aware that the youth's life was in peril if it became known that he had betrayed the conspirators, and that such discovery would incite the mob to extreme measures against the prisoner, and frustrate his own purposes, he enjoins on him absolute silence. Knowing that haste is necessary to secure the safety of his prisoner, he calls two officers and commands them to remove Paul from the city under the protection of a strong guard. That a guard of four hundred and seventy men should have been thought necessary to secure a prisoner against forty assailants seems strange at first thought; but it should be remembered that the country was in a very unsettled condition, the "assassins" were numerous, and murders frequent. The excitement in regard to Paul was very great, and Lysias perhaps suspected that there was more in the charge against him than he had

been able to discover. Then, too, the fact that he was a Roman citizen made him the more cautious, so that altogether he was anxious to deliver the prisoner safely into the hands of the superior authorities at Cesarea. With this object in view he provides a strong guard and sends the prisoner forth at an hour of the night sufficiently late for the city to have grown comparatively quiet, and sufficiently early for the company to have reached a place of safety before the break of day. The whole guard, all mounted, were to go about two-thirds of the distance, when all but seventy cavalrymen were to return to Jerusalem. To these men the chief captain also gave a letter addressed to Felix, in which he set forth all the facts in reference to the arrest, trial, and peril of the prisoner. Back along the old familiar road which he had traveled but a few days before Paul is now carried in the lone hours of the night, and arriving at Cesarea the soldiers deliver both the letter and prisoner into the hands of the Roman governor, who, when he has read the one commands the other

to be kept in custody until arrangements can be made for a proper trial.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

Evil men are ready to resort to any means, however atrocious, in order to destroy the influence of the gospel.

The Lord is able to bring to naught all the counsels of the wicked.

God's promises of protection do not absolve men from the duty of using all proper means to secure their own safety.

Man is to trust in God as though every thing depends upon divine aid, and he is to work as though every thing depends upon human energy.

CHAPTER XXX.

PAUL AT CESAREA.

FIVE days after the prisoner reaches Cæsarea his accusers, accompanied by a professional advocate, appear before the Roman governor. When all the preliminary arrangements have been made the lawyer begins his speech in carefully selected words of fulsome flattery, thereby hoping to win the governor's favor, and then proceeds to make a formal charge against the accused of sedition, heresy, and sacrilege. The first of these was an offense against the Roman government, the second was a violation of the Mosaic law, and the third was a violation of both the Roman and Jewish law; so that the charge against the prisoner was a very serious one. In the course of his speech Tertullus makes a false statement in regard to the conduct of the chief captain in quelling the riot at Jerusalem, and finds willing witnesses to the truth

of all his assertions in the Jewish persecutors of the prisoner. After listening attentively to the accusations thus made Felix gives Paul the privilege of speaking in his own defense in accordance with Roman custom. He begins his address in well-chosen words complimentary to the governor, but in striking contrast with the fulsome harangue of his adversary. He knew that Felix had ample opportunity for becoming acquainted with Jewish character and customs, and therefore would be able to appreciate the spirit which actuated the accusers. He had been appointed governor by the Emperor Claudius some six years previous to this, so that Paul's reference to the length of his administration was no doubt very gratifying, since it was difficult to maintain such a position over such a people for any length of time. The prisoner, in making his defense, follows the line of accusation and refutes each charge separately and in detail. He declares that if he has been guilty of any crime at Jerusalem it must have been so recent that it can easily be found out by investigation, for less

than two weeks have elapsed since his arrival in that city. His object in going there was the very opposite of what was charged upon him, for instead of going to profane the temple he had gone to worship in it, and by his own example to encourage loyalty in others. He thus emphatically denies the charge of sedition, and directly challenges his accusers to furnish proof of his guilt. But well knowing that if Felix undertakes a thorough investigation the guilt of raising the tumult will be traced to their own door, they let the challenge pass unanswered, and tacitly admit the prisoner's innocence. Better do that, they think, than criminate themselves. Having thus effectually met the first charge, Paul proceeds to the consideration of the second, which he frankly acknowledges to be true, but not in the sense in which it was urged by his adversaries. As he had not broken the Roman law by sedition, neither had he violated the Jewish law by heresy. The nation was indeed divided into "sects," as was well known, and to one of these, derisively called "Nazarenes," he belonged.

He therefore claimed for it the same toleration and protection from the Roman Government that was accorded to the others. He had not apostatized from the faith of his fathers, as his accusers charged, but he believed the same Scriptures that they believed, and indulged the same hopes that they indulged. That the opinions of the prisoner accorded with those of the majority of the nation his adversaries could not deny, and they were again put to silence and confusion. Paul's religious belief, instead of leading him to violate either Roman or Jewish law, had the very contrary effect, for it made him careful and conscientious in his conduct toward both God and men, so that his very life refuted both the charges of sedition and heresy; and having thus successfully answered these, he proceeds to consider the third and last charge brought against him, which was that he was guilty of sacrilege, or profanation of the temple. In order to show the inconsistency of this accusation he states that his object in going to Jerusalem was to carry gifts to his poor brethren and to present

offerings in the temple, thus conforming to the laws and customs of his nation. Twenty-one years had elapsed since his conversion to Christianity; and ten since he left Jerusalem for his missionary work, but through all these long, checkered years he had retained his love for his people and his interest in their welfare; and at the very moment he was assailed by the mob he was engaged in a solemn act of worship in accordance with the cherished customs of the Jews, so that the charge of sacrilege was manifestly absurd. The Roman law required the accuser and the accused to be brought face to face, but the Asiatic Jews who brought the original accusation against the prisoner justly feared such an investigation as this would lead to, so that their very absence was evidence of the weakness of their cause and the consequent innocence of the apostle. Having thus gained another point in his defense, Paul proceeds to challenge directly those who had brought the charges before Felix. The only point upon which they were competent to testify was the proceedings of

the Sanhedrim; and such testimony could not fail to expose their own guilt and folly in turning the court into a riotous mob. Thus, with wonderful skill, the prisoner puts his adversaries to silence at every point, and fully vindicates himself from every charge brought against him. Seeing the confusion of the accusers, and feeling the force of Paul's logic, Felix is at once brought into sympathy with the prisoner, from the fact that his long residence in Cesarea had made him acquainted with the bitter hostility of the Jews toward the adherents of Christianity. He had no idea of yielding to the demand made by Tertullus to deliver the apostle into the hands of the Sanhedrim, but at the same time he did not wish to offend these high officials, and he simply adjourns the case upon the ground that Lysias, who was an important witness, was absent. In the meantime he places the prisoner in the custody of a Roman officer, with instructions to treat him with kindness and consideration. He was to have all the liberty consistent with prison-life, and free inter-

course with his friends. He was very comfortably situated, for with him most probably were Timothy, Luke, and Aristarchus. Near by were Philip the evangelist and the church of which he was pastor, all of whose members would willingly administer to the apostle's necessities. Then, too, Cesarea was the home of Cornelius, the converted centurion, so that he may possibly have been the very officer in whose custody the prisoner was placed. Thus, although a prisoner, he had many opportunities for doing good, and we may rest assured that he availed himself of every one of them. This enforced rest was doubtless often oppressive to the active, energetic, nervous nature of the great missionary, but it afforded him ample opportunity for meditation and prayer, and thus lifted him to a higher plane of Christian experience than he could otherwise have obtained. But the two years he spent in prison at Cesarea were by no means idle and fruitless ones. He doubtless sent many messages, and even letters, to the churches he had founded, and a plausible conjecture

fixes this as the time when Luke wrote his Gospel under his direction and supervision. This may have been the time, too, when the "beloved physician" gathered from "Paul the apostle" and "Philip the evangelist" the materials for his history of the apostolic Church. Thus important influences were set in motion during those unrecorded years of prison-life, which have continued to widen in their onward sweep with every fleeting moment, and will continue to yield an ever multiplying harvest of rich results as long as time shall last. There is no evidence that Lysias ever came from Jerusalem as a witness in Paul's trial, or that the judicial proceedings were continued any farther at this time; but a few days after the trial the governor and his wife, prompted by curiosity, send for the prisoner and ask of him an explanation of the Christian faith. Felix was originally a slave, afterward set at liberty and promoted to his high position by the Emperor Claudius; but according to Tacitus he still wielded "the power of the tyrant in the temper of a slave"—one of the most

corrupt and oppressive governors ever placed by Roman power over Judea. He was the husband of three queens, one of whom was Drusilla, the daughter of Herod Agrippa, and the wife of a man who was still living. Before this guilty pair, thus living in open and defiant adultery, the bold prisoner is now brought; and choosing a text to suit his audience, he presents the beauties of justice and self-control in such striking contrast with the unjust and lustful character of his auditors that they are overwhelmed with consternation and shame. But though "terrified" by the graphic picture of the judgment scene thus sketched by the inspired orator, they are by no means penitent, and dismiss the preacher rather than give up their sins. Knowing that Paul was a prominent leader in the Church, and that his friends would willingly pay a large sum of money for his ransom, the avaricious governor held frequent interviews with him in the hope that he would offer him a bribe, as was very customary at that time. But the noble old hero who upheld the law in

all his preaching turned a deaf ear to all such suggestions, preferring imprisonment to freedom obtained upon such dishonorable terms; and when the office of governor passed from Felix to Festus he was still a prisoner, left bound not because he was guilty of any crime, but in order to please the Jews. The new governor was appointed by the infamous Nero, who reigned as Emperor of Rome from A.D. 54 to A.D. 68. The change in the administration gave the Jews another opportunity of bringing Paul to trial, of which they were not slow to take advantage. Meeting Festus in Jerusalem, they ask as a special favor that the prisoner be turned over to them, intending to assassinate him on the way from Cesarea. This request is emphatically refused, but a new trial is granted; and when accusers and accused are again brought face to face, the former charges are renewed, and once more successfully refuted by the apostle. Although convinced of the prisoner's innocence, yet desiring to curry favor with the Jews, the governor proposes to transfer the trial to Jerusa-

lem, that it may be conducted in the presence of the Sanhedrim. But well knowing the dangers that awaited him if he fell into the hands of his enraged countrymen, and conscious of his innocence, the grand old hero indignantly rejects the unjust proposition, and falling back upon his rights as a Roman citizen, appeals his case to Cæsar. The jurisdiction of Festus was thus brought to an end, and all that remained for him to do was to make out a formal charge and send the prisoner to Rome. But just how to frame Jewish theology into a charge worthy the attention of the emperor was a perplexing matter for the new governor, and he gladly avails himself of a visit from some royal friends who were well acquainted with Jewish customs to get assistance in his perplexity. These visitors were Herod Agrippa II. and his sister; and recounting to them all the facts in the case, Festus excites their curiosity to see the famous prisoner. Accordingly the next day the royal guests, attended by the chief men of the city, enter the judgment hall, not to try the case,

but to hear the eloquent orator make his defense. When all is ready the governor arises in the midst of the brilliant assembly, and in a ceremonious speech states the purpose for which they have come together. The object of the interview was not to try the prisoner, but to learn from him his peculiar views as a Christian, and he gladly avails himself of the cherished privilege of once more preaching the gospel. Though chained to a Roman soldier, and standing in the presence of royalty (Acts ix. 15), Paul is neither ashamed nor afraid to utter his sentiments, but raising his chain-bound hand with an impressive gesture he begins his address with true Christian courtesy. Referring to the king's acquaintance with the laws and customs of the Jews, he proceeds to give an account of his own life from the time he became a resident of Jerusalem, more than a quarter of a century previous. During all that period he had occupied a prominent position—first as an apt, ambitious pupil in the school of Gamaliel, then as a zealous member of the Sanhedrim, and

finally as a noted persecutor of the Church; so that his life was well known to his countrymen. He had ever been known as a disciple of Shammai, a Pharisee of the strictest character, and yet he was arraigned simply because he ventured to preach the doctrine of the resurrection, which was one of the fundamental tenets of the Pharisaic school, and was unmistakably taught in their Scriptures. The hope of the Jew was expressed in his elaborate and unintermitted service of worship and sacrifice, which hope was realized in the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. This was the theme of Paul's preaching which had so aroused the anger of his countrymen. In his speech before Agrippa he doubtless dwells at length upon this doctrine in its various aspects and bearings, proving therefrom that Jesus was the true Messiah. But of this speech we have only the merest outline preserved. This doctrine of the resurrection commends itself to every believer in the omnipotence of God, and finds a prophecy and pledge in the resurrection of Christ, which stands as the divine

attestation and seal of his Messiahship. Had we the entire address, we could doubtless see how the apostle naturally and logically passes from considering this doctrine to the narration of his own miraculous conversion; but as gathered from the recorded outline, the transition seems sudden and abrupt. Twice already (Acts ix. 1-18, xxii. 6-16) have we studied the account of this wonderful occurrence; but here we have it again, as though Paul never tired of repeating the story. He was always sincere, and he used his earnest efforts to crush the cause which clustered around the magic name of Jesus. When Stephen and other Christians were brought before the Sanhedrim he gave his "vote" for condemnation; or, according to the literal translation of the Greek, "cast his pebble," the vote being taken in those times by the use of small, round pebbles—the white for acquittal, the black for condemnation; and the language clearly indicates that Paul was a member of the Sanhedrim, as it was the only court that could pass the death-sentence according to Jewish law. This mur-

der of the deacon seemed only to whet his appetite for blood, and he continues to persecute the Church until suddenly arrested by divine power. The account which he here gives of this remarkable event omits several items mentioned in the other two; but it also emphasizes some things either omitted or merely alluded to in the others. It makes conspicuous the intensity of the supernatural light—exceeding even the noonday glare of an Oriental sun—the fact that the Hebrew language was used by the divine speaker, the fact that Paul's commission to preach to the Gentiles was received upon this memorable occasion, and the proverb which indicates that the persecutor had been vainly trying to stifle the promptings, misgivings, and warnings awakened by the counsels of his old teacher, Gamaliel (Acts v. 34–39), the appearance and prayer of the dying Stephen (Acts vi. 15, vii. 60), and the courageous conduct of the hundreds whom he had dragged to prison and death. Having given this account of his conversion, the speaker seems to try to compress the substance of vari-

ous visions and revelations into one statement, in which he gives an epitome of his life-work and that of every true preacher of the gospel. "To open eyes" that were spiritually blind, and "turn men from the power of Satan unto God, that they might thereby receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among them which are sanctified," was the high mission and controlling purpose of Paul, which he has bequeathed as a sacred trust to all his successors in the ministerial office. Convinced by the vision and voice of the risen Redeemer that his former life was all wrong, and that the gospel was the divine fulfillment of the hopes of the Jews, the awakened persecutor yields a ready obedience to the commands of his new-found friend and becomes an earnest preacher of righteousness—the theme of his preaching being everywhere and at all times true evangelical repentance, which manifests itself in a genuine turning from sin unto God, "with full purpose of and endeavor after new obedience." Like a true soldier he obeys his orders at once, beginning to proclaim the truth to others as

soon as he has learned it himself. This he does in Damascus at the very first opportunity afforded him, and again three years later upon his return to the city after his retirement in Arabia (Acts ix. 23-25, Gal. i. 17, 18). Upon his first visit to Jerusalem, after his conversion, we find him still carrying out this one controlling purpose of his life (Acts ix. 26-29); and finally, by divine direction, turning away from his countrymen, he heralds the glad news of salvation to the benighted Gentiles, proclaiming to all alike repentance for the past and reform for the future. There was thus nothing in his preaching of a hurtful character; and yet, so enraged did the Jews become that but for divine protection his frail life would long since have been sacrificed to the malice of his enemies, as the memories of Lystra, Philippi, Corinth, Berea, Ephesus, and Jerusalem abundantly prove. In his preaching Paul made no distinctions, but declared the truth just as faithfully and as earnestly to the illiterate and obscure as to kings and nobles, but he never transcended his duties as simply

a "herald" or mouth-piece of God. Rejecting the "traditions of the elders," he confined himself to the written word, and it was no new religion he preached, but the same old, venerated religion of the fathers, as gleaned from "the law and the prophets." He simply expounded the truths that he found therein recorded; and prominent among them was one which had been strangely overlooked and rejected by his countrymen. That the Messiah should suffer and die was clearly revealed in the Scriptures; and yet it was because of that very humiliation and suffering that they rejected him when he made his advent into the world. But it was only through suffering and death that his resurrection and ascension glory became possible, by means of which he was to "show light" to Jew and Gentile alike.

As the eloquent and impassioned speaker thus dwells with intense fervor upon the resurrection of a man who had been executed as a malefactor, and of the wonderful results which should be accomplished in all parts of the world through the influence of this stu-

pendous fact, the Roman governor can restrain himself no longer, but rudely interrupts the earnest preacher in the midst of his discourse. Something of Paul's life, both in public and private, was known to Festus, and his address upon this occasion only confirmed his impressions as to the prisoner's intellectual power; but being unable to appreciate such momentous truths, he erroneously concludes that the speaker's constant study of these profound subjects had unbalanced his mind, and he gives expression to his thoughts in a loud exclamation of surprise and ridicule. Only for a moment is Paul disconcerted by this untimely interruption, for almost instantly he replies in language of true Christian courtesy and self-command. Then turning to Agrippa, he appeals to him to attest the truth of what he has said. He feels that he can speak freely before the king because, being a Jew, he was familiar both with the prophecies concerning the Messiah and their manifest fulfillment in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth, especially the latter, which occurred not in some obscure

province of Judea, but in the capital city itself, and at a time of unusual publicity, when Jerusalem was crowded with visitors to participate in the Passover. The facts clustering around the event, the resurrection, the wonders of Pentecost, and the subsequent preaching of the gospel, as well as Paul's life as a fierce persecutor and afterward as a faithful preacher, were too well known to be disputed. Assured that Agrippa had an intellectual belief in the Jewish Scriptures, and that he must see in these well-known facts the fulfillment of the prophecies, the earnest preacher doubtless proceeds to set forth the importance of exercising a living personal faith in this crucified and risen Christ; and as he listens to the fervid words of the speaker the king well-nigh yields his heart to the persuasive influences of the gospel; or it may be, as others suggest, that with a cynical sneer he replies to Paul's earnest appeal in words of biting sarcasm and bitter irony. The Greek favors the latter idea, while the context and attendant circumstances indicate that Agrippa was deeply impressed

by the apostle's exhortation; for from that time forth he seems to have regarded the Christians most kindly, and during the Jewish war some years afterward he received the fleeing disciples into his territory, giving them both aid and protection. But that he himself ever became a Christian is extremely uncertain. After expressing the earnest desire that all his auditors might accept the gospel message, and thus share the joys which he himself experienced, the apostle concludes his speech; and while the royal party repair to the luxurious surroundings of the palace, he is carried back to his prison, happier far than either governor or king. On the way to the palace the prisoner's case is discussed, and all agree that he is entirely innocent of any offense against the government, and thus this interview has resulted in his complete vindication before the world in all ages. But his appeal to Cæsar was providential and fortunate, for had he been immediately set at liberty he would doubtless have been assassinated by his enraged countrymen, or at least would not eas-

ily have made his long-desired visit to Rome; nor could he have preached the gospel there under such favorable circumstances. His arrival as an imperial prisoner would give him notoriety, while the favorable opinion of him expressed by the governor would secure for him many privileges, as we afterward find verified (Acts xxviii. 17-23, xxx. 31).

CHAPTER XXXI.

ON THE WAY TO ROME.

HAVING appealed to Cæsar, Paul's case was removed beyond the jurisdiction of Festus, and as soon as the necessary preparations could be made, in company with other prisoners arraigned for various offenses, he was placed in the custody of soldiers and sent to Rome. The route chosen as the safest and best was by sea. Luke was doubtless one of the party, and speaks as an eye-witness of all that occurred during the voyage. In addition to the historian, there accompanied the apostle his intimate friend Timothy and a Macedonian by the name of Aristarchus, who seems to have been also a prisoner, arrested perhaps at Jerusalem with Paul. The crew thus presented a motley crowd of soldiers, sailors, prisoners, and preachers. The name of the officer in command was Julius, one of the emperor's body-guards perhaps, who had accom-

panied the new governor to Judea, and was now returning to take his place among the imperial soldiers at Rome. The vessel in which the voyage was begun belonged to and was sailing for a sea-port of Mysia, on the western coast of Asia Minor, and intended to touch at various points along the coast of pro-consular Asia. After bidding their friends an affectionate farewell, Paul and his companions enter the ship, and as she sails along the southern coast of Asia Minor he could see on the right the familiar mountains of his own native Cilicia, while on the left he could look upon the island of Cyprus, where he first went as a missionary years before. At Myra they find an Egyptian vessel about to sail for Italy, and the centurion transfers his prisoners to it and continues his journey. But the weather being very unfavorable they make but little headway, and contrary to the advice of Paul attempt to go on in the very face of the opposing elements in the hope of reaching a safe and commodious haven lying on the southern coast of Crete, where they intend to

spend the winter. Before they had gone very far they were struck by a strong north-east wind that blew with all the fury of a hurricane, and soon hurled the ship out of her course. Thus helplessly exposed to the fury of the storm the vessel rushed madly forward, and having drifted some twenty-five miles, at last comes under the shelter of a small island, where the sailors avail themselves of the comparative safety to secure the boat, which had been towed behind the ship because the weather at the outset of the voyage was fair and the anticipated journey short. But now the boat was full of water, and it was a difficult task to get it on board. Availing themselves of the temporary security afforded by the shelter of the island, they took down the fair-weather sails, hoisted the storm-sails, and taking all possible precautions, again give themselves up to the mercy of the storm, greatly alarmed lest they should be stranded upon the quicksands and dangerous shoals lying along the coast of Africa south-west from Crete. The night, however, brought them no relief, but on the

contrary seemed to increase the violence of the storm, so that on the next day they took the last precaution that remained to them by casting overboard all superfluous articles, whether of rigging or merchandise. But even this was insufficient to bring relief, for the storm continued with unabated fury, and the ship was about to be engulfed in the mad waves; and on the third day they threw into the sea their cooking utensils and other furniture. But with all their efforts inevitable death seemed to stare them in the face. The long mental strain, the severe physical toil, the benumbing effect of the wet and cold, the influence of fear, and especially the continuation of the storm, filled the company with despair, with perhaps one single exception—for while the minds of his fellow-passengers were thus filled with horror and gloomy apprehensions, Paul was calm and collected; and receiving a fresh assurance of the divine presence and protection, he avails himself of the privilege of speaking words of comfort and encouragement to his despairing and half-starved companions.

Selecting a position where he could be both seen and heard, he mingles the utterances of his faith with the wild wailings of the storm. While the others were giving up to their feelings of despair, this noble servant of God was engaged in earnest prayer that his long-cherished desire of preaching at Rome might not be disappointed, and that the lives of his companions might be spared, and a messenger is dispatched from the courts of heaven to assure him that both requests have been granted. Upon this assurance he now bases his exhortation; but before revealing the divine message he reminds the crew that he had forewarned them of this danger, to show them that his words are entitled to consideration. Julius, knowing that the prisoner had been adjudged innocent by both Festus and Agrippa, and pleased with his gentlemanly bearing, had already accorded him special privileges (Acts xxvii. 6), and now listens to his words with earnest attention, as he proceeds to give them the substance of the divine message. Paul's strong faith, shining out so conspicuously

amidst such gloomy surroundings, doubtless did much to restore hope and confidence in the hearts of his despairing companions. But although he thus assures them of deliverance from death, he foretells them that they must suffer shipwreck, and must prepare themselves for still further suffering and danger.

Two weeks had now passed since they began this disastrous voyage, and during the greater part of that time they had been helplessly driven before the fury of the storm. The only ray of hope that had dawned upon them during that long night of despair was brought to them by Paul, the prisoner; but its momentary light had no doubt long since been quenched by the horrors of their situation. Now, as they were on the point of again lapsing into the paralysis of despair, they became convinced by the noise of the breakers beating upon the distant shore that land was not far off, and by means of their sounding-line soon found that they were in imminent danger of running aground in the night. Casting "four anchors from the stern" of the ship to prevent

it from swinging around and striking upon the rocks, and also to keep the head of the vessel turned toward the land that they might thus run her ashore, they waited and "wished for the day" as only men in such a perilous position could wish. The fact that they were near to land brought to the experienced sailors both hope of escape and fear lest the ship might be dashed to pieces against the rocks. With the latter predominating, and under cover of a plausible excuse, they attempt to secure their own safety by means of the boat, intending to leave soldiers and passengers alike to perish in the sea; but Paul's watchful eye and shrewd intellect soon divined their real object, and without waiting to remonstrate with the sailors he goes directly to the centurion in command, who had both the power and authority to stop such proceedings; for he well knew that a ship without sailors would be at the mercy of the winds and waves. Thus informed, the officer hastens to act upon the apostle's suggestion, and to effectually remove the temptation cuts the ropes and casts the

boat into the sea; and compelled to share the fate of the others, the self-interest of the seamen soon prompts them to the discharge of their appropriate duties. Having thus rescued his comrades from one peril by securing the co-operation of the sailors, the noble old missionary proceeds to perform another important service by persuading the half-starved crew to partake of food, that they might thereby gain strength to perform the labors and endure the hardships yet awaiting them. In their perilous position they had neither felt inclined nor had they been able to partake of regular and sufficient meals, so that their strength was well-nigh exhausted. In the exercise of a noble unselfishness that stands out in striking contrast with the selfishness of the sailors, Paul considers the comfort and welfare of his companions, and knowing that on the following day all would have their strength fully taxed, he urges them to eat and assures them of safety. As proof of his own faith, and as encouragement to the others, he offers thanks to God for his goodness and begins to

eat in presence of the entire crew. Under the peculiar circumstances this conduct of the apostle could not fail to make a deep impression upon the minds of his heathen comrades, and one doubtless favorable to the Christian religion, of which the noted prisoner was a recognized exponent. Animated by the example and cheerful courage of Paul, the entire crew become more cheerful, and having partaken of a hearty meal, with strength renewed and hearts refreshed, they return to their labors with fresh vigor and energy. Each successive incident of the voyage has a tendency to raise the old missionary higher in the estimation of the crew, until instead of looking to the captain for guidance, they look to the prisoner. As the company gathered around the apostle to take their food, Luke avails himself of the opportunity of counting them, and finds the number to be two hundred and seventy-six persons—a large but not an unprecedented number for one of the large grain-ships of that day. The sailors had previously thrown overboard all the loose merchandise of the

vessel, and now, that it may be the more easily run ashore, they cast out the main cargo of wheat, which was doubtless already damaged by the salt-water. This work required considerable time, and before it was finished day had dawned. With glad hearts the imperiled crew welcome the sight of land, which is barely visible through the early twilight and the driving rain. Straining their eyes to recognize if possible the coast upon which they are cast, they discover a suitable place for landing, and they cut off the anchors and make other necessary preparations for running the ship ashore. But these important movements could not have been executed without the sailors, and but for Paul's precaution they must all have perished. Driven by the winds, the vessel soon runs aground in a narrow channel, and a new difficulty presents itself. The proximity of the land might cause the prisoners to attempt to escape, and if they succeeded the soldiers well knew that in accordance with Roman law their lives must pay the penalty, and they recommend that they all

be put to death. But here again Paul's influence saves the lives of all. So great was the centurion's respect for and confidence in him that he not only permits, but commands them all to swim ashore if possible; and his confidence in Paul's influence over his fellow-prisoners was not misplaced; for after reaching the shore not one of them attempted to escape from their guard. Availing themselves of the broken timbers of the wrecked ship, the entire crew swam safely to land, thus verifying the apostle's prophecy.

The shipwrecked crew—consisting of sailors, soldiers, prisoners, and passengers, nearly three hundred in all—thus cast drenched and shivering upon an unknown shore on this bleak and stormy morning in November, presented a pitiable sight indeed. But they were soon discovered by the inhabitants of the island, from whom they received many marks of kindness. The island upon which they were wrecked was doubtless the modern Malta, some sixty miles south of Sicily, near the middle of the Mediterranean. It was about

seventeen miles long, nine broad, and sixty in circumference. The inhabitants were from Carthage, and were then governed by the Romans. The Greeks and Romans called all men "barbarians" except themselves, and by this term the historian here designates the natives of Malta, who received the shipwrecked party with great kindness. To warm the half-frozen seamen they kindled a fire upon the shore, to replenish which Paul gathered a "bundle of sticks" from a neighboring thicket, and as he did so a venomous serpent fastened its fangs in his hand. The reptile was no doubt in a torpid condition, by reason of the cold; but being restored to activity by the heat, it suddenly sprung upon him as he was arranging the wood upon the fire. Knowing that Paul was a prisoner, and that the bite of the asp was certain death, the crowd that had gathered around the mariners—reasoning from the original principles written upon the human heart by the hand of nature, that justice will certainly punish the guilty—concluded that he must be guilty of some terrible crime, and ex-

pected every moment to see him fall dead at their feet. But to their manifest amazement he calmly shook the reptile off into the fire and "felt no harm," in fulfillment of the Master's promise (Mark xvi. 18). Watching him intently for a long time, and seeing none of the effects usually produced by the viper's bite, they knew that a miracle had been wrought which would require divine power, and they conclude that Paul must himself be a god. Their mistake was in supposing that he possessed such miraculous power instead of receiving it from another—that he was a god instead of merely "a man of God," as Bengel quaintly puts it. Near where the crew landed and this miracle was performed stood the residence of the governor of the island, who "received them and lodged them three days," until permanent winter-quarters could be provided for them. During their stay at his house his father was taken very ill with a disease which Luke, as a physician, describes with professional precision. At once Luke the doctor and Paul the preacher are sum-

moned to the sick-bed; but the one was well-nigh helpless because all his medicines were lost in the sea, while the other needed divine credentials to aid him in his missionary labors among these heathen people, and God at once furnishes his servant with an opportunity to prove that he is endowed with miraculous power and speaks by the authority of Heaven. Entering the chamber where the sick man lay, Paul put his hands upon him after he had offered an earnest prayer, and instantly the malady was healed. This restoration to health of the father of the governor soon spread from house to house, and induced many others who were diseased to apply to the old missionary for relief, and without exception they were healed in fulfillment of another promise of the Master (Mark xvi. 18). As an expression of their appreciation and gratitude, the people give the shipwrecked party many tokens of respect and kindness during their sojourn on the island; and when the time comes for them to leave the people add many valuable and useful presents, of which they were doubtless in

great need after having lost every thing they had in the wreck. But this benevolence no doubt extended also to the needy sailors and soldiers, and Paul's influence in securing them these favors, together with his miracles, predisposed them to the reception of the gospel; and many trophies of redeeming love were most probably gathered by the apostle during that winter, both from his shipwrecked companions and the inhabitants of the island. Just as soon as spring makes navigation at all prudent, the centurion avails himself of the first opportunity of resuming his journey to Rome, and for this purpose secures passage on board a vessel similar perhaps to the one in which they had been wrecked, which had also wintered at Malta. The "sign" of this ship was the representation of two mythological characters who were supposed to have power over the winds and waves; and a vessel whose very symbols bespoke its heathen faith in the gods of mythology the living and true God thus uses for the purpose of carrying his gospel to heathen Italy, as he now uses the in-

ventions of art and science to accomplish his purpose of evangelizing the nations. After spending "three months" on the island of Malta, Paul and his companions resume their journey to Rome, and the ship in which they sail soon puts into the harbor of Syracuse, a famous city on the east coast of Sicily, about eighty miles from Malta. In this historic place they remain for "three days," doubtless to unload their cargo; but while the others are thus busy trying to increase their worldly possessions, Paul is most probably engaged at his beloved work of preaching the gospel, as tradition makes him the founder of the Sicilian church. Resuming the voyage, they find it necessary to sail by a circuitous route on account of the winds; but the second day the wind blows directly in their favor, and they sail without danger between the famous rocks of Scylla and the whirlpool of Charybdis, and soon reach Puteoli, the chief port of Italy at the north-west corner of the Bay of Naples. Here they leave the ship, and Paul and his companions find a number of Christian breth-

ren who earnestly entreat him to remain with them for a few days; and doubtless they were permitted to do so, as Julius would be willing to accommodate his prisoners since he owed his life to the great apostle. The church at this place was planted by some earnest worker for the Lord, whose name is now unknown among men, and bears striking testimony to the zeal and diligence with which the early Christians "went everywhere preaching the gospel." This short visit doubtless greatly strengthened the church at Puteoli, and at the same time refreshed and encouraged the imprisoned preachers. They were now about one hundred and forty miles from Rome, but the news of the apostle's coming had already reached the imperial city, and in order to do him honor and accord him a suitable welcome the church sends a delegation to meet him, which they do about forty miles from the city at Appii Forum, while a second delegation meets the approaching company some ten miles nearer at the Three Taverns. Seeing the interest manifested by these brethren, the

old hero dismisses all anxiety from his mind, and renders thanks to God that his long-cherished desire is about to be realized; and he enters the great metropolis of the world not so much as a prisoner as a famous preacher accompanied by an escort of honor and surrounded by friends who will gladly aid him in proclaiming the gospel.

TRUTHS TO BE TREASURED.

God often selects ways that seem very strange to us for the accomplishment of his purposes.

Trials bring out the beauty of the Christian character.

He who sends the storm can control it.

Faith shines brightest in the dark.

The good man's influence is felt at all times.

The wicked are often saved for the sake of the righteous.

CHAPTER XXXII.

PAUL AT ROME.

AS the toil-worn travelers approach the imperial city, and the great missionary catches the first glimpse of its far-famed magnificence, his heart doubtless thrills with unusual emotion. The goal of his heart's highest ambition is now almost reached, and his long-cherished desire of preaching the gospel in Rome will soon be gratified. The warm welcome accorded him by the church encourages and strengthens him for the work before him, so that although a nominal prisoner, yet under the guidance and guardianship of Providence he is afforded the most favorable opportunities of publishing the glad tidings of salvation. His very "bonds" served to advertise his preaching (Phil. i. 13), which resulted in many conversions, and among the number some of the emperor's own household (Phil. iv. 22). At the first opportunity the centurion delivers

his prisoners into the hands of the proper authorities, and having perhaps become a Christian through his association with the apostle, he now exerts his influence in favor of his benefactor. This, coupled with the favorable report of the prisoner sent to the emperor by both Festus and Agrippa, secured for Paul special privileges. Placed in the custody of a Roman soldier, he was allowed to "hire" a house for himself; and though chained by one hand to his guard, he was permitted to preach the gospel to all who desired to hear him. In this "hired" house he remained for two years, supported by the government and by the voluntary contributions of the church, which considered itself fortunate to have such a pastor, even though he was a prisoner in bonds. As soon as he has sufficiently rested from his long, wearisome journey, and succeeded in securing suitable accommodations, the zealous preacher and patriotic Jew invites his countrymen to a conference for the purpose of removing from their minds, if possible, any misapprehensions that they might have received.

As a prisoner he naturally supposed that the people had imbibed prejudices against him through rumors that had reached them, and these he desired to correct in order that they might not check the influence of the gospel. With this object in view he begins by asserting his loyalty to the laws and ceremonies of the Jews, and then proceeds to recount the history of his arrest and imprisonment. Felix, Festus, and Agrippa had all adjudged him innocent, and would willingly have set him at liberty. To avoid falling into the hands of his enraged countrymen, he appealed to Cæsar; but not for the purpose of accusing the Jews, for whom he entertained only feelings of the kindest character. It was to make this explanation, and to assure them that he was imprisoned simply because he preached that Jesus of Nazareth was their long-promised Messiah, that he called them together; and he was doubtless greatly relieved and encouraged when his auditors assured him that they had never heard of the matters to which he referred. The interview also afforded him the

opportunity to preach the gospel to them, for his words aroused their curiosity to hear an explanation of the Christian religion. What little they knew of it was gathered from its enemies, and they naturally desire to hear what one of its most renowned advocates has to say in its favor. Accordingly they arrange for another interview; and when the appointed day came, curiosity to hear the strange preacher concerning his strange doctrine drew together quite a large crowd. For their accommodation Paul gladly turned his dwelling into a church, and earnestly explained the prophecies in their reference to Christ, in whose life and death they had their unmistakable fulfillment; and so interested did both preacher and people become in the discussion that it was kept up the entire day, perhaps in the form of questions and answers. As a result of the discussion some were convinced of the truth of Christianity, while others, by reason of their prejudices, refused to accept the apostle's conclusions. Soon the audience are engaged in wrangling and heated debate among

themselves; and finding them unwilling to listen longer to the glad tidings of the gospel, the earnest preacher gives them one last warning drawn from a picture sketched by Isaiah centuries before. These warning words of the prophet are quoted no less than six times in the Gospels, as well as upon this occasion and in the Epistle to the Romans. Both Christ and Paul declare that the prophecy was fulfilled by the Jews of that age. They had become so sensual and corrupt that they deliberately rejected the truth, lest it should force them to change their character and conduct.

In Rome, as elsewhere, the old missionary makes his first offer of salvation to his own countrymen; but finding them belonging to the hardened class described by Isaiah, after thus solemnly warning them of their danger, he turns reluctantly away from them to preach the gospel to the more impressible Gentiles. This he has abundant opportunity to do, since he is compelled to remain in Rome for two long years. Roman trials proceeded very slowly, and this was especially true in Paul's

case. The papers containing his indictment were most probably lost in the shipwreck. To send back to Festus for new papers, and bring the necessary witnesses from Jerusalem, would require a long time. As a Roman prisoner he was protected from the malice of the Jews, and in the providence of God he was so situated that he could carry out his long-cherished desire of preaching the gospel at Rome, and through his labors many trophies of redeeming grace were gathered in the imperial city. During his long imprisonment his mind doubtless often turned anxiously to the scenes of his former labors, wondering how the churches he had established were prospering, and how this individual and that was advancing in the divine life; and in lieu of the visit he is unable to make he writes letters to several of these churches. Prominent among them is the one addressed to the church at Ephesus, which was gathered from the heathen world by his own personal labors, and of which he was the pastor for three years. The object of the letter was to set forth the personal dignity and

glory of Christ, the greatness of his salvation, and the unity of the divine family—themes with which the prisoner's mind was now more than ever occupied. But although thus writing upon the grandest themes that the universe can suggest, the faithful old preacher does not forget the children of his former charge. As he sits pen in hand in his distant prison home, he calls to mind the group of merry prattlers he had known and loved in other days, and knowing their peculiar dangers and duties he would secure them from the one by unfolding to them the other; and he addresses to them a message of valuable advice in language of the utmost simplicity. Besides this letter to the Ephesians he wrote one to the church at Colosse, which was founded perhaps by his "fellow-prisoner Ephras," from whom he received his information in regard to its spiritual condition. Since the imprisonment of their pastor the church had become heretical upon several important points, and it was to correct these heresies that the letter was written. About the same

time a third letter was written, and addressed to a personal friend of the apostle, who was perhaps a member of the Colossian church. Some time before this one of his slaves by the name of Onesimus had run away, and going to Rome had been brought under the influence of Paul's preaching and converted. He at once confessed his sin against his master, and perhaps requested the apostle to write the letter for the purpose of making the necessary explanations to Philemon, and preparing the way for the penitent slave's return to his former servitude. These three letters were all written about the same time—A.D. 62—and intrusted to the care of Tychicus, one of Paul's most faithful companions and co-laborers (Acts xx. 4, Eph. vi. 21, Col. iv. 7, 2 Tim. iv. 12, Titus iii. 12), who was about to return to Asia Minor, and under whose charge the fugitive Onesimus was placed. From these letters we learn that the energetic old hero was by no means idle during his imprisonment. He preached daily perhaps to eager listeners, his very chains as they clanked upon his up-

lifted hands giving solemn emphasis to his words; and history affords no more striking contrast than that of Paul thus preaching Christ under the very walls of Nero's palace. But in addition to these daily duties he had upon him the "care of all the churches." In the providence of God he was surrounded by many faithful helpers. Perhaps he found his old friends Aquila and Priscilla, from whom he had received such valuable assistance in other days, still members of the church in Rome. At least we know that he had with him Luke, Timothy, Tychicus, Aristarchus, Epaphras, Mark (Col. i. 17, iv. 7-14), and perhaps others, through whom he could communicate with his brethren elsewhere by means of messages and letters. When Paul wrote his letter to Philemon the prospect was good for his speedy release from prison (Philem. 22), but a few months later important changes were made in Cæsar's household. The pretorian prefect, in whose charge the prisoner had been so long kept, died, and his place was filled by a man of the vilest character. The infa-

mous Nero divorced his young wife, Octavia, and married the profligate Poppæa, who was a proselyte to Judaism, and therefore hated Paul. These changes and others warranted the apostle in writing to his brethren in Philippi to state that his case was by no means encouraging (Phil. ii. 17, iii. 11). The letter to this church was written some months after those sent by Tychicus, perhaps during the second year of the apostle's imprisonment. This church had always been of special interest to Paul, not only on account of the memorable circumstances under which it was organized, but also on account of its more sterling qualities and its thoughtful care of his necessities (Phil. iv. 15). It was but natural, then, as his thoughts wandered back over the past that they should fix themselves on this church, rendered so dear to him by reason of these associations, and that he should address to them a letter as a reminder of his interest in and love for them; and especially since they had recently proved their devotion to him by sending him a substantial token of their affec-

tionate regard (Phil. iv. 18). Epaphroditus, a firm friend of the apostle and a member of the Philippian church, had, at great personal sacrifice, left his distant home and come to Rome for the purpose of seeing his old friend and bringing to him the contribution of the church; and taking advantage of his return, Paul sends a letter expressive of his appreciation of their kindness, which was the more welcome because of their poverty (2 Cor. viii. 1, 2). To encourage these beloved brethren in the midst of their persecutions (Phil. i. 28-30), and to heal some slight dissensions which had occurred among them (Phil. ii. 1-4, 12-14), were his objects in writing this letter. No church was more orthodox or more steadfast than that of Philippi, and none of Paul's Epistles are so joyful as this, though written amidst the gloom of a long imprisonment.

In addition to these letters written to various churches, the apostle perhaps also aided Luke in preparing his history of the early Church, which was most probably written at Rome A.D. 63; but this history fails

to give us an account of the termination of Paul's trial, and we are compelled to fall back upon tradition and a few hints in the pastoral epistles for our knowledge of the subsequent events of his life. It was the universal belief of the ancient Church that his appeal to Cæsar, when finally heard, resulted in his complete vindication. Restored once more to liberty, the old hero of so many thrilling events hurries away at the first opportunity to revisit the churches he had previously established (Phil. ii. 24, Philemon 22). These he encourages, instructs, comforts, or rebukes, as their character and condition seem to require; and in this work he was apparently engaged about four years. At the end of that time, having left Timothy in charge of the church at Ephesus, he writes him a letter from Macedonia A.D. 67, for the purpose of directing him in the management of the church, and instructing him how to deal with the heresies then prevalent there. Not long after the apostle himself visits Ephesus, and from there sends a letter to Titus, who had been left in Crete

in order that he might perfect the organization of the church there; and to guide him in the choice of officers and other features of this important work was the object of the letter. In the meantime the Roman authorities have learned to hate the Christians, having been taught by Nero to hold them responsible for the great fire which well-nigh destroyed the imperial city. From that day forward they were the victims of frequent persecution, and easily enough a pretext is found for arresting the prominent leader of the obnoxious sect, who is once more hurried away to Rome.

But now his condition is in striking and melancholy contrast with what it was during his previous imprisonment. The danger is so great that but few of his former companions have the nerve to follow him (2 Tim. iv. 10), and he is treated with indignity and insult as a malefactor (2 Tim. ii. 9). Few of his friends dare visit him in his prison (2 Tim. i. 16), and none are willing to stand by him in the hour of his trial (2 Tim. iv. 16). In his last hours he clings to the few friends who have stood

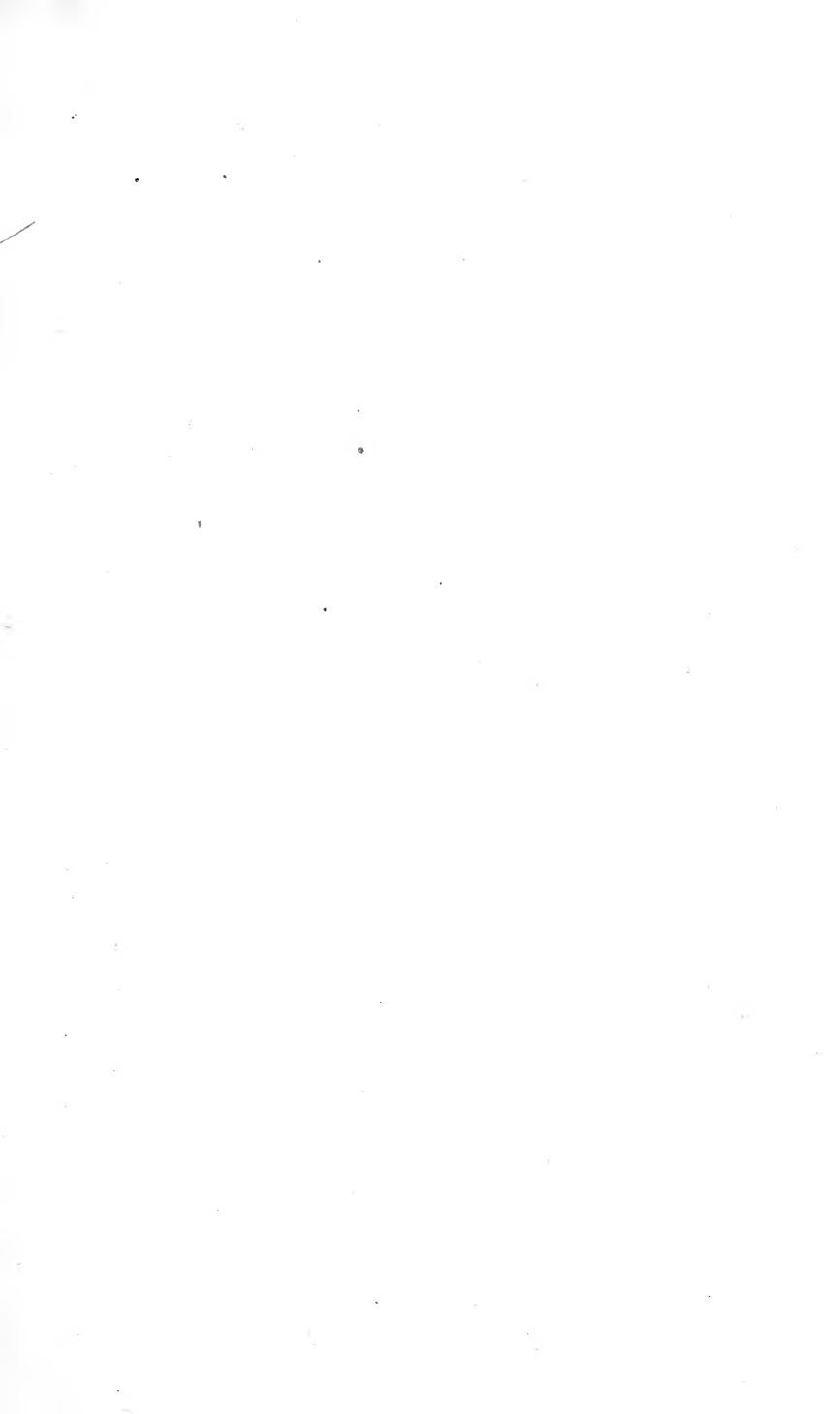
by him, one of whom is the faithful Luke, and another the brave Onesiphorus, who had come all the way from Asia to see him despite the difficulties and dangers he had to encounter (2 Tim. i. 16, iv. 10). But as the old hero thus stands facing certain death his mind recalls the pleasant associations of the past, and his loving heart is filled with an eager longing to see Timothy, his favorite friend and faithful companion in so many of his missionary labors. He is still in charge of the church at Ephesus, but in the hope that he may reach Rome in time to receive the apostle's dying benediction, he hastily writes him a letter, which he sends by the hands of the faithful Tychicus (2 Tim. iv. 12). In this letter, which was written only a short time before his death, he urges Timothy to come to him with all possible speed; but lest he might be too late to receive the parting counsels of his spiritual father, the letter is filled with faithful advice couched in words of inexpressible pathos and tenderness. We know not whether the young preacher reached Rome in time to see the old hero die; but if the Epistle to the Hebrews was written after that event, as many suppose, then it seems pretty clear that he bravely encountered danger and threatened death in or-

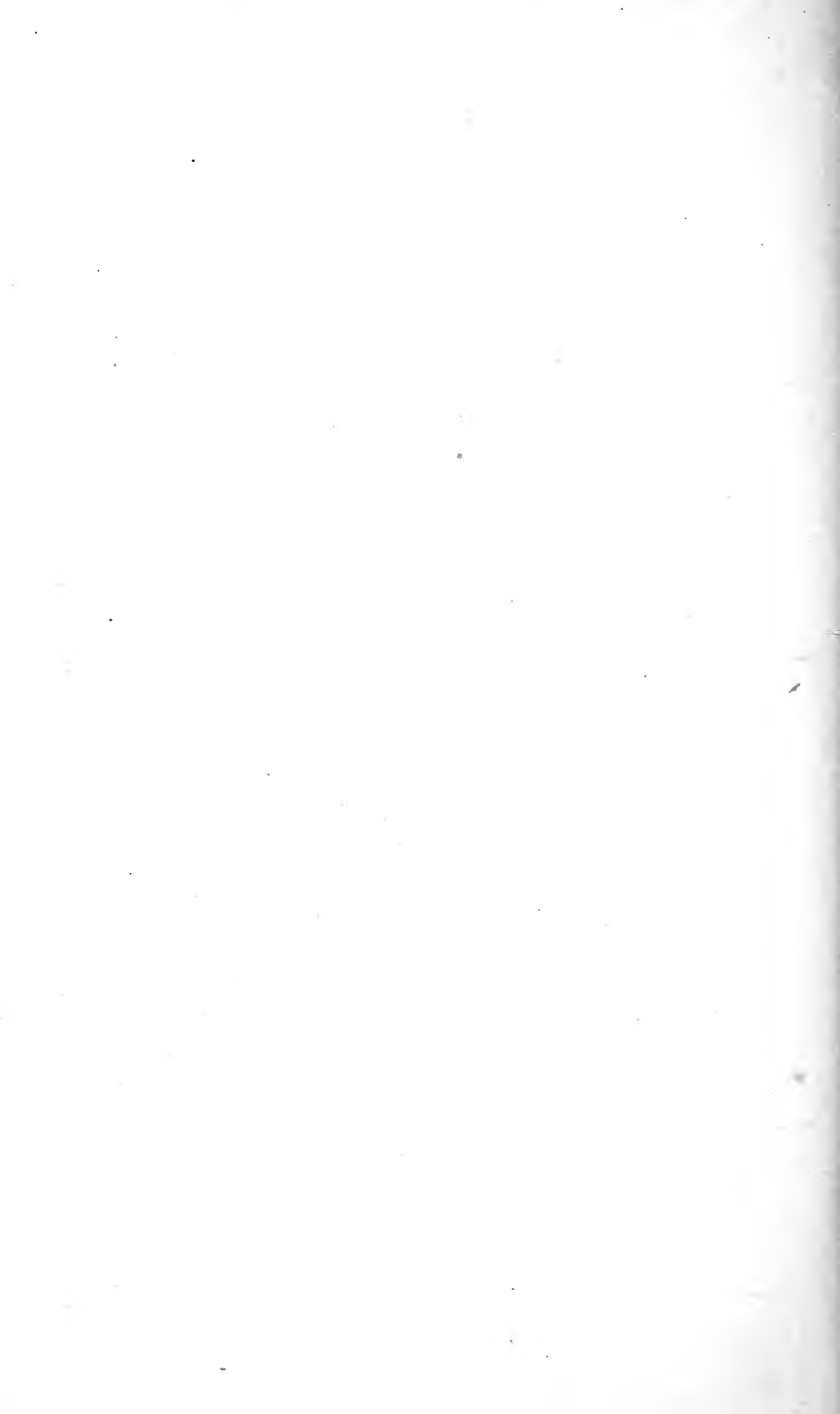
der that he might gratify this last wish of his faithful friend (Heb. xiii. 23); and although he thus willingly shared the apostle's chains, he escaped his fate. When the fatal hour approached, Paul was fully prepared for it (2 Tim. iv. 6-8), and marched forth to the place of execution more like a conscious conqueror than a condemned criminal. His privileges as a Roman citizen exempted him from the lingering tortures that were inflicted upon many of his brethren, and he was executed by decapitation in A.D. 68, the last year of the reign of the infamous Nero, who a few months later died the miserable death of a suicide. Weeping friends took up the corpse of the fallen hero, and deposited it beside other martyred forms in some dark recess of the catacombs; but no man knows the place of his burial.

Besides his incessant labors in preaching the glorious gospel of Christ, this noble defender of the faith has bequeathed to the Church a legacy of incalculable value in his numerous writings; for of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament thirteen were written by the great missionary himself, and two others—the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Hebrews—under his influence and supervision, if indeed the latter was not

the work of his own hand. But, besides the great "apostle to the Gentiles," there were many other faithful laborers in the apostolic age who by their active efforts set in motion influences which throughout all time will continue to yield a harvest of rich result for the glory of God. From the pens of Matthew and Mark, John and Peter, James and Jude, as well as from those of Luke and Paul, dropped words of momentous import and priceless meaning, which to-day illumine the inspired page with a heavenly luster. And from these lives and letters have emanated an influence and a light which have grown stronger and brighter through the centuries that have come and gone, until what was two thousand years ago but the first faint rays of the early dawn has in this nineteenth century flooded the world with a transcendent glory, which is destined to deepen in intensity and widen in extent until the last lingering shadow of ignorance and sin shall be dispelled, and the redeemed earth, "baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire," shall rival heaven itself in unsullied beauty and dazzling splendor.

THE END.





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